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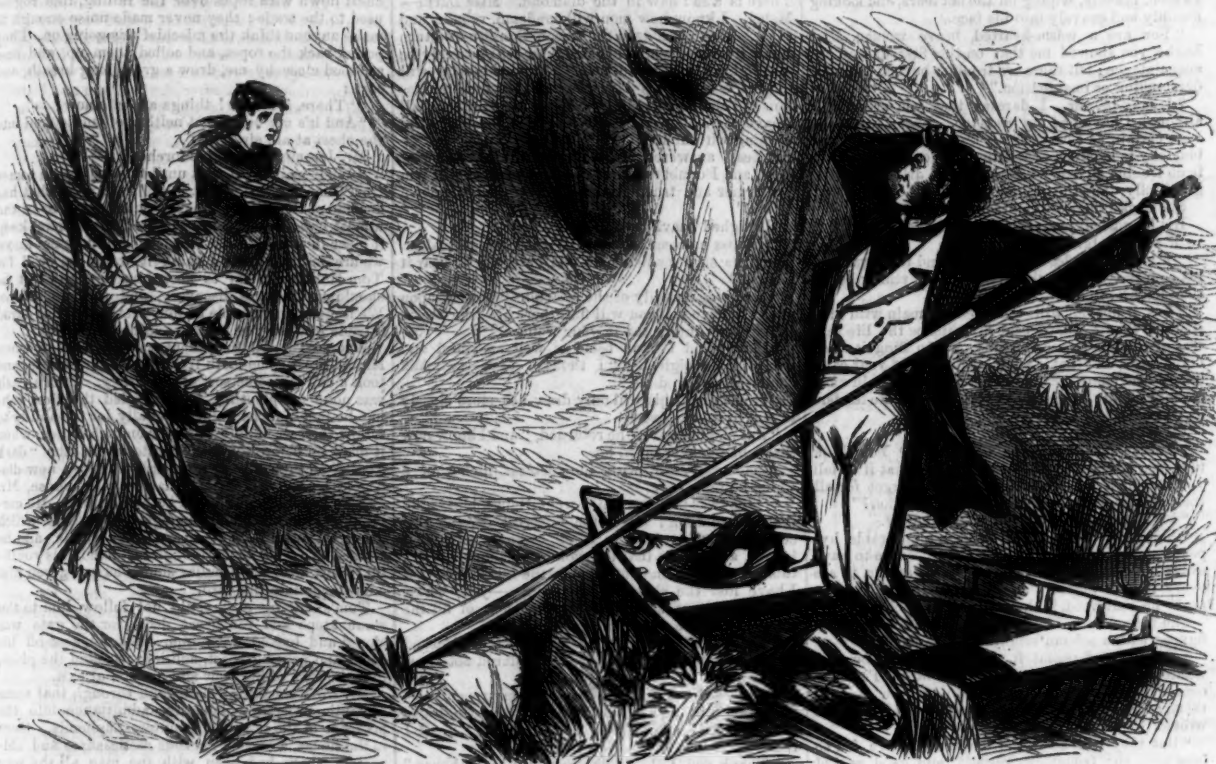
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[REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD.]

No. 305.—VOL. XII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 13, 1869.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE AND LOVE.]

## THE FLAW IN THE DIAMOND.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Miss Arlington's Will," "Leaves of Fate," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER XXVIII

MORLEY ASHTON, white, shivering, with the look of a man pursued by a spectre, came down the steps of the great hall door at Holly Bank, and confronted a dog-cart from his own establishment, with one of the Ashton servants driving a strange gentleman.

"What has happened?" demanded he, sharply. "I knew—I knew this was to be a momentous day. My mother—"

"No, sir, oh, no," the servant hastened to reply, full of respectful affection, "there's nothing amiss, sir. It's only this gentleman, just down from London, sir, says his business is very important, and so I brought him over to you."

"Yes, sir," said Dick Manners, jumping down nimbly, and coming forward with all the eagerness of his mysterious news. "I've brought you this paper, which we found, sir, outside the door of the villain's room."

Morley Ashton stared at the speaker for a moment, but dropped his eyes to the paper which was thrust hastily into his hand.

His face was already so white, it could not blanch any more; but there passed a quick shiver across it.

"Ruth Weston. Mark Daly," he exclaimed, "his rights! Great heavens! 'his rights!' What does she mean? She is there in London. She bids him appeal to me! It is coming! It is coming, the sword is falling!"

His looks were so strange and wild, his manner so incoherent, that the Ashton servant forgot his deference through earnest affection, and seized his hand to examine the pulse.

"You are ill, sir. Come home to Lady Constance, I beg of you."

But Morley by this time had regained something like composure. Nothing had contributed so much to help him as this deferential look of the servant.

He would keep this universal respect, while yet it was possible.

He put back the paper into Dick Manners's hand, and said, almost sternly:

"You have made a mistake; this is for Mark Daly. He is in the house. John, go in and find him, and tell him he shall have all the help and money he needs."

He said this, and walked away around the house, through the formal, deserted-looking gardens. He went on slowly, head drooping, arms folded, and came presently into the lovely grove which bordered the river. Just here it was narrow and deep, and the water swept along with great waves, that had almost the force of a cataract.

Morley Ashton walked to the brink, and stood there, looking down into the water. There was a stern, white despair on his face, which, now there was no observer present, was not concealed. The eyes held that fierce, dumb despair which is so much more fearful than any other sign of human suffering. The beads of perspiration came out on the white forehead, and trickled down his face, but he did not lift his hand to wipe them off. Once he looked up into the sky, with a long questioning glance that seemed to expect some answer to be written out upon the smiling blue.

"Fallen, yes, it has fallen!" he muttered. "It must all come out now. I wonder if a star that falls has any pang? Mine will be almost as swift and deep a descent. They will know it all—know how foul a wrong has been hidden from sight by their honours and favours. Those who have followed me with applause and affection will sneer and condemn."

He walked on slowly and came back, the damp of agony still on his forehead.

A terrible, terrible conflict went on in this man's soul, the powers of darkness wrestling fiercely for the mastery over his better nature.

Again his eye followed the deep rolling waves, and there was a feverish, hungry longing in his look. He went around the bend, and found a little skiff moored there.

Like one who sees a longed-for opening for escape,

he loosened the fastenings with eager hands and leaped in. He took out his tablets, wrote hastily upon them with his diamond-headed pencil, and was about tossing the case to the shore, when a second thought restrained him.

"No," said he, aloud, "there must be no sign, not one. Let my mother have the comfort of believing it to be an accident."

And he carefully erased what he had written, and replaced the little ivory leaves in his pocket.

Then he took up the oar, but he turned his face to the shore for a last look. He hated Holly Bank more and more. The fine old place had only been a dumb reproach, a sharp dagger since the moment of possession, and now he thought, with a sort of bitter satisfaction in the justice of the happening, that it would give him the last glimpse of earth.

Slowly, slowly the wild dark eye passed from one object to another. It was beautiful, very beautiful! Never had the earth seemed so fair, or the possibilities of human life so rich and grand. And he had thrown them away—one fatal, fatal mistake had set him thus adrift on this wild and troubled stream, which went eddying—whither?

He gave a sudden start, a tall, slender figure came out hastily from the trees, a face almost as pale as his own was turned towards him. Two slender hands were stretched out imploringly towards him.

"Mr. Ashton, Mr. Ashton, come back, I wish to speak to you."

Half mechanically he turned the boat back, and it touched the bank.

"Did you wish anything?" he asked, huskily.

"I—I—may go in the boat with you?" she asked, scarcely able to keep back a sob.

His lips moved, but gave forth no sound.

She did not wait for anything farther, but stepping lightly before him she took her seat opposite him.

Morley Ashton looked at her silently.

Her lip trembled, and it was only a faint smile she was able to assume.

"Now, you may go if you like."

"Why did you come here?" asked he, as he put out the oar.

"Because—because—I saw your face," she answered, and the excitement and alarm which she had just experienced found relief in a sudden burst of tears.

He watched her in dull amazement.

"You weep—and for me, Miss Darke?"

"Yes, sir, for you, and for the terrible, terrible trouble which must have come upon you to have driven you to even the thought of such a frightful thing as you but just now contemplated," she answered, bravely, wiping off the hot tears, and looking steadily and gravely into his face.

"You are a warm-hearted, brave woman, Miss Darke, you showed me that on the first day of our acquaintance; but there are troubles beyond your understanding or imagination."

"It may be, sir. I daresay that you are right; although I have had my trials too. But of this thing I am certain, as certain as my knowledge that yonder blue sky is bending protectively over us, that there is no trouble so overwhelming as to drive us to the great folly—and the greater wickedness—of suicide."

She spoke the words shudderingly.

His lip curled just enough for her to see it move with a bitter, bitter smile.

"When a king loses his throne, and the loyalty of his country, do you think there is anything better than for him to die?" he asked.

"Yes, if heaven wills that breath remain with him, there is this to do, to bear in patience the life that was given him to use worthily, not to fling it back derisively. But that is a false statement in your case. There are many hearts which turn to you in most faithful loyalty, many that overflow with the tenderest affection."

He shook his head drearily.

"You do not know—you cannot see. You think that men still honour and trust me. What if I tell you that in a few days I shall be a target for all their arrows of scorn, and honest indignation?"

"I will not believe it," she cried, angrily.

"What if I own that I have been a miserable hypocrite, a whitened sepulchre? That I deserve to have every honourable man's finger pointed at me, to see every honest woman's eye flash indignantly upon me?" he continued, in that dreary, mechanical voice. She turned upon him her pale, tearful face, transfused with a solemn brightness.

"Even then I repeat it, you but add to your sin, whatever it is, by flying like a coward. Face the consequences meekly, but bravely, if you deserve them, and in earnest penitence strive to repair the wrong."

"But they will all turn from me. I have fed so long upon the friendship, respect, and good will of my fellow beings, that I cannot bear their coldness and scorn. I am a coward, indeed, when I think of standing before the world with my sins exposed. I wish you had not come, Miss Darke."

"And I shall bless heaven to my latest day, that some good angel sent me here to watch you," she replied, vehemently. "Indeed, indeed, you are beginning to turn away from the wrong, when you confess that you have sinned. Ah, sir, that has been your grand mistake, that you have aimed to suit the low standard of your fellow sinners. It should be of little consequence what their opinion would be. But one guide can safely lead us on, but one voice give the true verdict. Oh, sir, think nothing of the world's scorn, but turn to ask heaven's forgiveness."

He looked into the earnest face, and his lip quivered as he asked:

"Is it possible, tell me, Miss Darke, do you think it is possible for me to obtain strength enough to bear an exposure? Will heaven help me to such strength?"

"Are you penitent, truly penitent?" she asked, dimly wondering if it were herself, or some one else speaking through her lips.

"Heaven knows I am. Heaven must know how this cankering secret has eaten into my heart."

"Then be comforted; be sure that the darkest hour has passed, the fiercest pang is over."

There was a solemn certainty in her look, a sweet, saintly compassion on her face, which moved him greatly.

A moment after she saw the tears pouring down his cheeks.

"God bless you, Mabel," said he, brokenly; "you have spared my life, you have saved my soul."

Her heart bounded with a great throb of joy.

"Your have come back to yourself, sir," was all she said.

"I should like to tell you the story," said Morley Ashton presently, after he had grown a little calmer.

At which Mabel winced. She did not want to see her hero removed from his pedestal. She would rather still believe that Morley Ashton was grand and good, without a single failing, as the shire believed. A vague, indirect accusation did not disturb her ideal sensibly, but she trembled to have a plain

indictment made out. But she bent her head in acquiescence.

And he told it bravely, sparing not himself, choosing the words which meant the most, and in no ways seeking to soften or palliate.

When it was done, he lifted up his haggard face, filled with a touching, pitiful yearning, and stretched out his hand, flashing a mournful glance upon the ring which sparkled on his finger.

"You see that I chose my signet significantly. There is a sad flaw in the diamond. Miss Darke—Mabel. I know how men will condemn, rebuke, and sneer. I can see even Sir Anson Donnthorne turn away from me, while his daughter will scarcely be able to bear the sight of me. My poor mother will forgive, because she is my mother, but the humiliation and shame will kill her. When she is gone, shall I have a friend, a single friend in this wide world teeming with humanity?"

"Yes," answered Mabel, "you will have one at least, and I doubt not your life of atonement will win you firmer and truer friends than you have known before."

He sighed heavily.

"It does not seem so now. But it does not matter. I deserve such punishment, and I will try to bear it meekly."

"You judge rashly of the affection bestowed upon you. Believe me, you will find there are true hearts still warmly interested in your welfare."

"How blind I have been, as well as sinful and wicked," he sighed. "I thought once that Ada Donnthorne loved me."

"If she does, this will only draw her more closely to you," replied Mabel.

"But she does not," he returned, "and I know now that I have never loved her."

A moment after, with the feeblest flicker of a smile, he repeated:

"That was not love which went; blind, blind idiot that I have been! It is the bitterest drag in this cup I am coming back to drink, to know now what love is, and to see that the worst punishment when this my sin finds me out, must be the knowledge that I have lost the chance of winning—you, whose love could have saved me for the loss of all the world's applause and friendship."

Mabel sat silent, adding her face with her clasped hands. What was revealed there she dared not allow him to see.

"Well, at least I can be manly in my repentance. There shall be no shrinking from my known duties now," he said again, in a firmer voice. "Shall I row you back to shore, Miss Darke?"

"Thank you, I should like to return to the house," answered Mabel, faintly, wishing in blind, vague pain, that, without any effort of theirs, the little boat might slip away down over the hurrying waves, through the lovely emerald meadows and broad forest, beyond the village and the town, out away upon the blue fathomless ocean; they two alone, gliding onward towards some lovely tropic isle, when life might be begun anew, and where the world's babel murmur might never come.

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

THE cart came just before dusk, that same day, to the door of the dingy old building in Bleeker-street, and the stout-armed proprietor mounted the stairs, armed with the key of Mr. A. Frost's apartment. He found the premises clear, the entire passage-way as deserted and silent as if it had been Sunday, or the place an unoccupied one.

There was a little difficulty at first in getting the key to turn the lock, but Mr. A. Frost was not there to see it, or he might have discovered also, with those sharp eyes of his, that there were sundry suspicious marks of interference from other than the legitimate source. Finally, the stout fingers of the man accomplished the task. He went in, shouldered the chest, but found it too heavy to be taken down in that manner, and dragging it outside, he locked the door, and went down to call in an assistant. Such being found without much trouble, he returned with the reinforcement, and the chest was carried down, put into the cart, and taken away.

The moment it started, as if by stage magic, up sprang a little group of attentive watchers, one of whom, disguised in an old sailor's coat and oil-skin coat, went sailing out on the opposite sidewalk, and kept pretty fair pace, scarcely a trifle ahead of the cart.

So that there came back presently the prompt report:

"He went, and he went, Mr. Jeremiah, and I thought he was never going to stop; but just as my legs and his too, I expect, were giving way, he turned in to a queer old place down by the wharves. And a man came out. It was like Frost, but it wasn't; a man who looked like a priest, all dressed in black,

with a white neck-cloth, and he looked to the chest being taken in, and he paid the man. I hung about a little mean shop that had sight of the place till dark, and then I went out and stowed myself in a snug hiding-place, at the back of the place, and watched, till I thought I was never going to see any more, and just as I was thinking of creeping out, and going home, out of a back-door came two men, a-taking the chest between 'em. The back-yard is right over the water, and they came out there, and let the chest down with ropes over the railing, like rogues used to the trade; they never made noise enough to make anyone think the mischief was going on. They pulled back the ropes, and coiled them up, and one, as stood close by me, drew a great long breath, and says:

"There, it's done! things are safe now."

"And it's my belief that neither of 'em looked into the chest at all, sir."

Mr. Jeremiah wiped his forehead.

"We'll wait, we'll wait until the gentleman comes from Chardon Valley. It is well we know what has become of the chest. Your testimony will be of the utmost importance, Mike. Keep it clear, man, keep it clear in your mind. This murderer does not know we are on his track. I think it would be well for Tom Halliday to try to keep him in sight, lest he should make some discovery, and seek to escape. We'll make an example of this wretch who has dared intrude into our respectable and honest house."

And so Tom Halliday kept watch, and knew when Mr. A. Frost came forth from his lodging-house, and took a cab for some sort of a journey. Tom's cab was none too plentiful, but he hailed the first vehicle he met, and bargained liberally for the ability to follow the cab, and he was near enough to see, when it drew up before the looked gateway of the "dark castle" on the river, near enough to make a new discovery beside, which was that, when he chose, Mr. Frost's lameness and cough both vanished. He certainly sprang out nimbly enough from the cab, which drove off down to the village livery stable, and he walked as evenly and lightly as any man in his youthful prime, after his peculiar summons had given him admittance into the yard.

Tom's longing eyes could not follow him to the stone steps and the great door, for the gate was closed and locked upon him. But he sent off his agent and panting beast, and hung around the place, to make sure of his hour and method of exit.

Mr. Frost meantime had gone through that same romantic process which gave admittance into the presence of the beautiful Countess Euphemia. Once in the house, a certain nervous restlessness and shivering, which had been with the man all the way from town, vanished, and his eyes lighted up with excitement and exultation.

Instead of a bouquet he presented her with a costly jewel. She was there on her throne, with the silver spray of the fountain flashing before her, the fan-waving handmaiden by her side.

There was a scarlet flush on her face. She leaned forward towards him eagerly, unmindful that she was crushing the dainty pearl diadem which lay in her lap.

"You are welcome, my noble friend," said the richly modulated voice. "You remember the agreement—you were not to send me up a jewel until you were close upon success. Do you mean me to understand that the hour of my joy and triumph has come?"

"It is close at hand, beautiful countess, very close at hand."

This strange creature, in her fierce splendour of beauty, singularly suggestive of some magnificent wild animal of the trackless tropic wilds, sprang up, and clasped her jewelled hands.

"Joy, joy at last! Tell me all my hero, my king!"

But then she checked his speech with a sudden imperious wave of her hand.

"But no, not yet. This joyful night must not pass uncelebrated. Away with you, Dora, and tell them to prepare a banquet. I, too, must be decked in worthy attire."

"Be not impatient, my noble knight; remain here, picturing what bliss shall follow our triumph, and the time will fly on golden wings. I will return shortly."

She glided away across the tessellated flooring, and vanished under the archway, leaving him alone. Mr. Frost sat down. The movement sent a flutter through the peacock fan thrown across the pile of satin cushions, and brushed one feather tip across his cheek.

He started and glared around him, and began shaking as with an ague.

"What touched me? What cold, invisible hand struck at my face?" he muttered, looking about with scared eyes, even amidst that brilliant light. "St. George! if it be true that ghosts can rise!"

And he remained there, nervous and ill at ease.



feverishly impatient for some one to come, to relieve him from this new dread of solitude. But he forgot it readily when, with the stately grace indeed of the Egyptian queen, the countess came gliding through the doorway.

She had outdone her own brilliant taste, and had levied tribute from her richest possessions. A robe of snowy silken damask, cut fancifully into square lappets, heavily trimmed with a silver fringe, trailed behind her. It was fairly sprinkled with little stars of diamond lustre, paste instead of the true gem, but producing nearly as magnificent an effect. The diadem looked like strung dewdrops in the sunlight. A scintillating ear-drop, set with the same sparkling jewels, flashed a tangle of rainbow athwart each scarlet cheek, and a line of blazing light followed the wide bracelets which clasped the finely-shaped arms. A veil of silver gauze fell from the diadem, under which strayed the massive black braids. It was so dazzling a vision, as she came forward under the chandelier, that her visitor was fain to close his eyes as from a blinding glare, but brilliant and sparkling as was the attire and the jewels, those magnificent eyes outshone the whole.

What jubilant exultation and triumph flamed over the wild, beautiful face!

Mr. A. Frost might well be intoxicated by that smile of hers.

"Now," she cried, joyously, taking her seat, and holding out her hand to him with a queen's grace of condescension, "now, most noble and gallant knight, you shall tell me the welcome tidings. Let me hear it again, tell me once more that the hour of my triumph is at hand."

"Very near at hand, beautiful Euphemia. Your loveliness to-night is almost too dazzling for my eyes. Oh! what a queen of fashion and beauty, I shall introduce to the world. My wife! you have promised to be my wife."

"Yes, your proud and happy wife on those conditions. Tell me what you have done."

"I have matured my plans, laid out the programme, and the only object and hindrance has to-night been swept aside. Euphemia, beautiful Euphemia, you will not fail me. You do not know, nor guess how much I have dared, and risked, to win you."

"Bravo, true heart!" she answered, and seeing that there was still a shadow on his face, she laid her soft white fingers on his hand, and looked tenderly into his, with those wonderful, intoxicating eyes. "Smile, my noble knight, do you doubt that the reward shall be suited to your valour?"

And the man's face brightened and flushed hotly. "This very weak the application shall be made, fair countess," he said, confidently.

"The application for what?" asked she, holding her breath for the answer.

"The application of the new heir for that fine property of the noble Countess of Woxley. The proofs are all ready, the proofs which shall drive her forth from her proud home; and that woman, who has tried to baffle all my plans, will not be there to hinder me."

"You mean the woman, Ruth Weston," said the Countess Euphemia; "what have you done with her, my knight?"

A cold chill crossed him, even in the midst of the glow of his triumph and excitement. "Let it pass. She is safely out of the way."

"Well enough for her, meddling babbling!" laughed the Countess Euphemia. "And for the rest?"

"All is secure. When my claim is safely established, Sydney will bring forward the proofs for the girl's establishment in her rights."

"But will it help him? She has escaped, and she abhors him, she told me so."

"What is easier to be settled? We know just where to find her. At the right moment I shall swoop down upon her, and she shall be compelled to marry him. Half he obtains he has agreed to make over to you, and he will be likely to fulfil the conditions, because he will be in our power, for at any moment we may come forward and produce the true heir."

"And you are sure that you will establish your own claim? Oh, I can wait, I can wait to come forward before that woman, and ask her in a way which I shall know will stab her haughty spirit through and through, to ask her who is the Countess Woxley now, and who is nobly born? My noble knight, you will give me this vengeance for which I have thirsted. You have worked patiently, wisely, and unobtrusively."

"All for love of you, Euphemia. The years have come and gone, and they seem like a dream to look back upon, but it is more like a dream that I am so soon to realise my hopes—to claim you, whom once I worshipped so hopelessly, for my own."

"Your very own," she returned, bringing out again one of her dazzling smiles, because she saw a vague consciousness of some sort hanging over him.

And leaning towards him with her soft breathing wafted across his face, and her glowing face beaming upon him from out its glittering framework of diadem, necklace, and earrings, the syren whispered tender words, and pictured flattering scenes, until he was again enraptured with the subtle, poisonous sweetness of her spell.

After that came the banquet, as she chose to style it, carrying out the pseudo style with which she surrounded herself.

They wheeled forward a table to the right hand of the couch, and brought out on silvered trays delicate bubbles of china, filled with coffee, whose perfume stole out with a more enchanting fragrance than even the flowers which enriched a ruby vase set in the centre of the table. Notwithstanding the short notice, the repast had attractions which might have suited the most fastidious epicure. Mr. Frost, however, did less justice to the viands than the fair hostess, but he was ready to attend to her wishes, when the wine tray was brought in, and he filled the slender, crystal glasses as often as she desired.

She raised hers with a gay smile.

"Here's to the new Count and Countess Woxley. May they have genuine gold and diamonds, instead of plate and paste for their future banquets."

The slender glasses clinked merrily, and her silver laughter floated with it, but through and above, Mr. Frost seemed to hear a gasping voice crying out to him in accusing accents.

He rose somewhat abruptly, and declared that he must return to town.

"And the next time you come, remember, it must be as the established count. I can hear through Sydney how you progress, and I can wait, knowing you are at work," she said; "come, then, for your bride when you please."

He kissed the lily-white hand with passionate fervour.

"I shall come, you may be sure, and shall hasten matters as speedily as possible."

And he took his leave.

(To be continued.)

## BEHIND THE COUNTER.

"On! here you are, Miss Green. I have been looking and looking for you. I thought you must have sold out and got married."

"No, I am here, with my name out in three places," replied Miss Green, twisting a spool of silk in a bit of paper for a little curly-haired girl.

"To be sure. But I was looking for your window; it is always so attractive."

"I am having the show-window cleaned to-day," replied Miss Green, in explanation of its emptiness.

"That indeed! Yes, but now I have found you, I should like to look at infants' hoods. I want one for my baby," returned the lady, who stood before the counter.

Miss Green brought forward a great blue box, and Mrs. Whitney began to toss about the contents. Scarlet, blue, salmon, and white. Light as sea-foam, delicate as spring-flowers, and fanciful as frost-work. Hoods of all prices, hues, and styles.

Mr. Whitney, standing by his wife, and supposing, in his masculine simplicity, that she had really come in to buy a hood, wondered, after his stupid man-fashion, why she did not do it. But Miss Green knew the lady's errand a great deal better than her husband; and she stood, with the patience of long experience, answering a host of frivolous questions, and trying to keep a look of interest on her face.

"And you have nothing else?" said Mrs. Whitney at last.

Miss Green hesitated an instant; but she was a scrupulously truthful woman.

"None for sale," she replied, directly. "I have another, which I bought for a pattern. I shall have some like it in a day or two."

"Oh! Miss Green, do let me see it!" cried Mrs. Whitney, with as much enthusiasm as a geologist over a new fossil.

And when Miss Green good-naturedly held up a tiny rose-coloured cobweb of a thing, she cried out the more.

"What a beauty!" said she. "Just look at it, Fred! Wouldn't that be perfectly sweet on Bell?"

"Very much so," returned her husband, trying hard not to show that he saw nothing but a handful of pink yarn.

"It is lovely!" pronounced Mrs. Whitney, stepping back a little, and looking, with her head upon one side, at the hood on her hand. "Do let me take it home and try it on my baby. If it suits her complexion, I will order one like it. I will certainly send it back directly after dinner."

Again Miss Green hesitated. She knew, as well as Mrs. Whitney did, that the lady only wished to take a pattern of the hood for her own baby and the

babies of all her friends. But she knew something else. She knew Mrs. Whitney had power to injure her business very much, and the disposition to do so if offended, and that she was as ready to take offence as nitro-glycerine to explode. So she reluctantly wrapped the hood in a paper, and Mrs. Whitney took it away, repeating again her idle promise to return it the same day.

As Miss Green expected, however, she did not see it again for half a week, and then it came in by the hands of a servant girl, partly covered with a newspaper, too much soiled to be saleable; but with no word of apology.

Late in the afternoon of the same day, a lady came in Miss Green's shop as unlike Mrs. Whitney as a guinea-hen is unlike a peacock. She was a stout, red-faced woman, and fanned herself continually with a fan that rustled.

"So you are not gone," said she, sinking into a chair. "Mrs. Tischendorf was in our house this morning, and she said you were married, and had given up keeping shop, and were moving out. She was in here and heard Mrs. Whitney say so. Is it true?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" replied Miss Green. "I have made no change excepting to clean the show-window."

"Well, well! What will folks say next? Everything but their prayers!" replied Mrs. Fordham, fanning herself still more violently. "Well, I am glad it isn't so," she continued. "Your place is so handy to run into when I am in town. And it is such a nice place to sit and see the styles in the street. I often say, if I had to work for a living I would go into a shop—if anything should happen to Mr. Fordham, you know. All one has to do is to look at elegantly-dressed ladies, and take their money. Such an easy life!"

Miss Green smiled to herself, thinking of the many weary lessons to be learned behind the counter, little known by those before it; but she made no direct reply. And presently Mrs. Fordham, rising with a flutter as of shaking out feathers, came up to the show-case.

"What a pretty tidy!" said she. "What is the price?"

"Seven and sixpence," Miss Green replied.

"Seven and sixpence!" cried Mrs. Fordham, with a little scream, and a great deal of fanning. "Why, Evans, across the way, has tidies precisely this pattern for six shillings. Clara Blackwell bought one there yesterday. I have heard it remarked often that Evans sells cheaper than you do, but I always contradict it. I make it a principle to deal with you, because, said I, a woman ought to patronise women, if she can, and still regard her own interest. But of course one cannot be expected to overlook that, when there is such a marked difference in price of the same article."

Mrs. Fordham looked, as she spoke, at Miss Green with as much disapprobation as though she had been caught embezzling from the government.

"I wouldn't have believed it if I had not seen it with my own eyes," she continued, with severe dignity, turning and walking, in what was meant for stateliness, out of the shop.

Miss Green, from behind the counter, looked after her with a faint smile. She was not at all afraid of Mrs. Fordham's ill-favour, and she knew the lady liked the sightly set by her window, and the chance for gossip and news-gathering too well to stay away long; but still these little sharp words were no pleasanter than chestnut-burs in one's finger. She did not care to say to Mrs. Fordham that the very next day after the tidy was first exhibited, one of Mr. Evans's sales-girls came in, and, as Miss Green saw perfectly well, counted the stitches in the new tidy, and caught up the pattern in her ready head, which was speedily reproduced in the opposite window, and at really a less price than could be afforded, just for the sake of underselling. This was not the first, by many and many a time, such a flaw as this had come into the perfectness of the "easy life" behind the counter.

Presently a heavily-trimmed brown walking-suit floated into the shop, with a dresy brown hat attached to it, and a pair of impatient brown eyes and a magnificent fall of "imported" brown curls under the hat.

"I came in, Miss Green," began the haughty mouth belonging to this stylish suit, "to see you about your bill. I am surprised to find it is not correct. What could I possibly want with a gilt brooch, or a seven-and-sixpenny lace veil? And there is a charge for tinsel ribbon, and another for hair-oil, that, of course, I never had. What am I to understand by it?"

"I am sure I cannot tell you, Mrs. Cardinkle," replied Miss Green. "Some of the items of the bill are of long standing; but it is made out from my day-book, and I am sure, includes only what has been taken by some member of your family."

"That is not so. You have mixed your accounts," returned Mrs. Cardinkle, with offensive assurance. "I am very much annoyed if I cannot depend on the accuracy of my bills. I do not wish to charge my memory with such trifles; but there are some items any person of common sense must perceive I never could have use for. For instance," she continued, looking ready to commence an action for slander, "don't you know I never bought a breakfast shawl that was worth no more than five shillings?"

"You might, perhaps, for some poor person," returned Miss Green, with quiet dignity. "And, indeed, I remember it was one of your servants who selected it, together with other articles, in your name."

"Oh, Betty, probably! That may explain it. Betty was dishonest, and I had to discharge her. Well, I have checked off those articles I know I ordered, and will send in the money in a day or two."

"So you are expected to bear the loss that comes from her employing an untrusty servant?" said a little, sharp-eyed woman, who was standing before the counter, as Mrs. Cardinkle brushed past her and went to her carriage, with no word of apology or any softening of her magisterial air. "That is one of the objections to buying on account," continued the sharp-eyed woman, with a satisfied nod. "Pay for everything as you get it, I say, and would if it were my last word. Some say they cannot; but all can if they would; go without till you can pay; and that would save many a poor body from running into temptation and going beyond their means."

The woman nodded again energetically two or three times, and poor, badgered Miss Green felt like nodding with her.

Thus Miss Green's shop-life went on, full of vexations, full of enjoyments; but, bring it pleasure, bring it pain, she must hold to it; for she and her shop were the principal dependence of four people—a widowed mother, a maiden aunt, and a little orphan niece.

At last a new visitor found his way behind the counter. He was a little fellow with a beautiful mouth, but imperfect eyes, and some queer bits of wings on his shoulders. He came in on the hat of a learned professor from the university on the hill; and if he had been the professor of zoology or entomology, the appearance of the creature might seem easily accounted for: but indeed he was a very mathematical professor, of mathematics.

"I came in, Miss Green," said he, utterly unconscious of the creature on his hat, "to see if you have any more of those nice little fishing-cases like some I have seen from here. I am going into the North during vacation, and I hope to find occasion there for fishing-tackle."

"Yes, sir, I have another," replied Miss Green, bringing forward a roll of bright embroidery and unfolding it.

"Yes, yes! This is it! This is exactly what I want! All fitted up, too, thread, hooks, and wax! Yes, spoon-pocket and all! Why, this is magnificent," said the professor, looking up at Miss Green in delighted surprise.

At that instant the winged creature on his hat shot an arrow from a little glittering bow he held in his hand, that flew directly in Miss Green's eyes, and, glancing back, was buried in the dry heart of the professor. But the arrow and its double wound being invisible, nobody started or screamed; only the professor thought to himself:

"Miss Green has very beautiful eyes! So expressive!"

And then he went off to his chalk and black-boards, and Miss Green went on selling crochet-hooks and slipper-patterns.

"What a forlorn hole!" said the professor, when he went to his room that night. "Now I suppose a lady would make a regular bird-cage of it. What is the difference? What would she do?"

Then he stood and looked all about him.

"Well, now! The chairs straightened around, and a picture hung up somewhere, perhaps."

So he set back the chairs as pickets on a fence, and pinned a print under the mirror, in half unconscious imitation of a bunch of pressed pansies in a straw frame under Miss Green's mirror. But somehow the effect was very different, although the poor professor could not tell why.

"It looks like a barber's shop," said he, with an unformed impression that his effort at giving a feminine appearance to his room was a failure.

The next day a brother professor, who was going with him, having seen and admired his fishing-case, he kindly offered to get him one like it. But on calling at Miss Green's he found she had no more.

"I can get you one made, Professor Saranac," said Miss Green, obligingly. "Not with an embroidered cover like yours: there is hardly time for that before you go; but with a cover of kid—a scarlet or bronze kid would be very pretty for it."

"So it would," replied Professor Saranac.

"So it would, and I will step in again for it—tomorrow, shall we say?"

"I can hardly promise it before the day after, but possibly to-morrow," she replied.

On that possibility, as he said, and honestly supposed, the professor called next day; but, in fact, it was on the possibility of the case not being ready, which made two calls necessary.

And only a day after, he came in again.

"If I mistake not, Miss Green, I saw some very pretty neckties in your show-case. Oh, yes! These are very neat. I will take a couple. And let me see—handkerchiefs! Have you any linen handkerchiefs?"

"Yes, sir. Do you prefer plain white?" asked Miss Green. "Here are some very pretty bordered handkerchiefs."

Plain white certainly Professor Saranac had intended, but Miss Green's question struck him as a suggestion, and he followed it at once, wondering he had never noticed before the superior beauty of a handkerchief with a border of tiny purple stars.

"What a sensible face, and so modest and dignified! And I don't know where one will see a more ladylike, pleasing manner than Miss Green's," said Professor Saranac, afterwards, addressing himself to the cover of a treatise on trigonometry, and feeling an odd sensation in the left side, that he supposed came from imperfect circulation.

"Nothing serious," quoth he. "I need rest, that is all. So it is well that the vacation is upon us."

So he went on in his blindness among the northern hills, stopping there at a quiet place, half-lodging and half farmhouse, with a mineral-spring behind and the lake and mountain-ranges before. And here, so weird was the effect of the enchanted arrow, he saw nobody but Miss Green.

One lady possessed her gray eyes, another spoke with her voice, while yet another had the same quick and efficient manner. And so Professor Saranac, naturally, went back to town with a living remembrance still of Miss Green.

Happening, by the merest chance, to be walking by her shop on the evening of his return, he accidentally saw her through the window, and casually meeting her eye, bowed incidentally, and then, on a sudden impulse, stepped into the orderly, tastefully-arranged room.

"Excuse me, Miss Green, coming back after my absence, I find the sight of one familiar face pleasant," said he, recalling in a dim way the requirements of society.

But upon Miss Green greeting him with quiet cordiality, he forgot all that again, and went on telling her the little incidents of his trip, with a comfortable sort of home-feeling, until interrupted by the coming in of a party of ladies for matched worsteds.

"Oh, well, good-evening, Miss Green. I will call soon with those specimens of minerals and the box of mosses I spoke of," said he, innocent as a lamb.

But catching sight of a suggestive smile on the face of one of the ladies, he went out with a half-consciousness, that gave him an instant expression somewhat reminding one of the lamb's mother.

Nevertheless, having promised, he had to go in with the mosses and minerals; and, it being a rainy day, with not much doing, he staid for a long, nice talk, and went home after it so much exhilarated that he spoiled his best hat before he remembered to raise his umbrella.

That evening, Mrs. Harrington looked full of information as she poured out his tea.

"Mrs. Farnham dropped in to see me to-day, and she tells me a piece of news," said she. "She tells me I am likely to lose one of my lodgers," she added, looking at the professor as though he were an oyster and her eyes were oyster-knives.

"Ah! is Mr. Wheeler going to leave?" returned Professor Saranac.

"No, sir! Not Mr. Wheeler!" replied Mrs. Harrington, with so much emphasis that the professor looked up in mild wonder. "Well," she continued, "Miss Green is a very mild sort of lady, and I command your choice, I must say."

Professor Saranac's mild wonder changed to open astonishment.

"Me! Miss Green!" said he. "To be sure I never thought of it before; but really—why not? I will go and ask her this very evening."

"Bless me! What an innocent!" ejaculated Mrs. Harrington, as the door closed hastily after the professor. "And I really believe he will do it."

And sure enough he did.

"You do not know what you are proposing," said Miss Green, about an hour after this, standing under the only lighted burner in her shop, just where Professor Saranac had surprised her in the work of closing for the night. "I am one of a family of four people, who would think that the end of the world had come if I should leave them."

"But you needn't leave them. I don't ask nor wish you to. I have been homeless and friendless for so many years, that I am glad you are one of four," protested Professor Saranac, whose motto in life was "never be defeated."

So presently he had argued Miss Green into his own opinion, and before Christmas the solitary had been set in a family.

"I always considered Miss Green very much of a lady, and I am sure she should be thought no less of for being willing to work when it was necessary," said Mrs. Whitney, balancing Professor and Mrs. Saranac's wedding-card on the finger where she wore her largest diamond.

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Cardinkle. "Miss Green was always a lady, and she belongs to one of our oldest families."

"She was a great friend of mine," remarked Mrs. Farnham, "and I shall be one of the first to call as soon as ever they get back from Paris."

"Humph!" soliloquised Mrs. Harrington, whisking the icing for the bride-cake. "It is a most extraordinary good thing for both of them: but the Professor would have blundered through life without ever thinking of it if I hadn't put it into his absent-minded head. I could see what he needed as long ago as the day when I happened to be in the shop, and observed how ladylike and dignified she took Mrs. Cardinkle's insulting remarks about her bill; but I didn't exactly perceive how to bring it about then. However, as soon as Mrs. Farnham mentioned Mrs. Tischendorf's meeting him in Miss Green's shop, the way flashed over me, and I said to myself, I can do it! She ought to be married, and he ought to be married, and she is the very one for him, as I knew before. She is intelligent and refined, and has common sense enough for two, and I'll bring it about. And so I did. Pretty well done, Mrs. Harrington. Pretty well done!"

F. L. P.

#### YES AND NO.

In the circle of the languages there do not exist any terms half so emphatic as the two short words which express assent and refusal. How many men's fortunes depend upon them! and how soon is the sentence pronounced! Their very brevity indicates the intensity of their meaning. If the rich man, who has granted a favour to the needy, knew the warmth of gratitude which glows in the heart that blesses him—the elasticity of step with which the suppliant hastens home to acquaint those nearest and dearest to him with his success, and the genuine happiness which is thereby diffused among a family whom it rescues from misery; and if that wealthy individual who has rejected a poor man's suit were only aware of the anguish of soul which he inflicts, if he witnessed the slow and irresolute step with which the disappointed petitioner retraces the way home—if he saw the sick wife raise herself from her pallet of rags to learn their fate, and, on its announcement, heard her exclamation, as she fell back upon the bed, of "Oh my poor children!"—if the great were acquainted with all this, and well considered it, there would surely be less hardness of heart and less misery in the world.

Yet even the wealthiest cannot be expected to grant every demand upon their bounty; nor is every one who comes with a doleful story in his mouth a fit object of benevolence. Many a man has been ruined, simply because he could not say No; a worthless character comes to him with a plausible story of distress, and being of a disposition too indolent to doubt, because doubt might involve him in inquiry, and wishing to get rid of the fellow's importunity, he yields all that is asked.

Thus we see that he who never confers a benefit, and he who never refuses, as long as he is able to grant, do equally little good to the really deserving poor. The former gives to nobody, and the latter to none but the worthless.

We see, also, that a judicious use of the insignificant looking particles Yes and No, is alike of vital importance to the man who employs them, and to him who anxiously awaits their decision.

**WRIGHT'S INSTITUTION.**—The late Miss Catherine Wright, of Liverpool, who died some months ago, bequeathed the sum of 10,000*l.* in trust to a committee of leading Liverpool gentlemen, to form the nucleus of a fund from which to grant pensions to aged and distressed members of the upper and middle classes of society: natives of Liverpool, or long time residents in Liverpool, to have the preference. No person under sixty years of age, or in the receipt of 30*l.* a year, or more, to be eligible; and the pensions granted to range from 20*l.* to 30*l.* a year each. The trustees have now drawn up a code of regulations and instructions to candidates, and the first apportionment of pensions is announced for July next.





[THE NEW INMATE.]

## THE PROPHECY.

BY THE

Author of "Oliver Darvel," "Michel-dever," &c., &c.

### CHAPTER IV.

A SMALL, active-looking man entered the hall, after greeting the master of the house politely, but coldly. There was evidently little good-feeling between the two men. Ashford knew that Mr. Whitney had denounced him more than once as a wolf in sheep's clothing, and that he had made an effort to have him dismissed from the church to which they both belonged. The lawyer, on his side, knew that this man had appropriated the hard earnings of his wife's early life, and had secured them in such a way that she could derive no benefit from them. What his object was remained a mystery as yet; but the shrewd little man thought a day would come when it would be developed, and not to the credit of the man who tried to make himself so suave and fascinating to those who did not dwell in his own home.

The faded and almost hopeless face of Mrs. Ashford told its own tale of weariness under the depressing influences of her life, though it was rarely seen except in the little village church to which all the neighbourhood resorted. She returned few of the visits that were made her when she first came to reside in the Vale, and the reason given by her husband for this neglect was, that Mrs. Ashford's health did not permit her to leave her own house, and her unequal spirits unfitted her for the enjoyment of society.

In spite of this assertion, Mr. Whitney's wife persisted in calling occasionally; for she had known Laura Bingham when both were young and gay, and, although no great intimacy had existed between them as girls, she now felt the deepest sympathy for one so thoroughly uprooted from the soil that had proved so congenial to her, before the advent of the dark-browed husband, who had placed her in the position of a subjugated household drudge.

Mrs. Whitney remembered Mrs. Bingham as round, rosy, and sentimental—from this last trait sprung her preference for the Corsair-looking man who had made himself master of her fate; she knew her to be thoroughly good and high principled, yet she marvelled at Mrs. Ashford's submissive spirit towards the man she had endowed with all her earthly goods. She shrewdly conjectured that the poor woman made the best of the lot she had chosen, and decided that the fair-spoken husband was a tyrant in his home.

Mr. Whitney knew more than his wife conjectured,

but he thought it safer to keep his information to himself; as that little woman was not gifted with much reticence.

He now curtly said:

"It's a cold morning to venture out, but when Jonah told me that Mr. Falconer wanted me at once, I thought it best to come. Is he really so very bad?"

"He insists that he will die at noon to-day, but that is one of his hypochondriacal fancies. He is no worse; in fact, he seems better than he was yesterday, or indeed for many days past. He insisted that you should be sent for, and I thought it best to humour his fancy. He's anxious about the disposal of his little property, I suppose."

"Hem—yes—I presume that he wants me to write his will. I will go to him at once if you please."

Ashford led the way to the sick man's room, and found his wife administering to him the coffee she had prepared. Mr. Falconer looked bright from its stimulating effects, and he cordially thanked her for all her kindness to him, as she turned from the bed to make way for the visitor.

Mr. Whitney nodded to her in a friendly manner, and taking the thin hand of the invalid in his own, he cheerfully said:

"I came in a hurry, sir, to obey your summons, but I am glad to see there was little use for it; you look strong enough to battle through a good many days yet."

"Appearances are often deceptive, Whitney. I am strong enough to do what lies before me, and my mind is clear enough to know what I want of you. But there is little time to lose; so please clear the room, and let us proceed to business at once."

At this hint, Ashford and his wife went away, closing the door behind them. The lawyer opened a small satchel he carried in his hand, and produced paper, pen, and a bottle of ink.

"I always carry my tools with me," he said, in his curt way, as he placed them on a table near the bed. "Of course, you want the will made that you have so often spoken about, so I came prepared."

"Yes, I wish to settle what is to be done with the little that is left to me. It's a trifle to what I once possessed, but my own prodigality impoverished me, and those who went before me did not spare the estate. But it's idle talking of that now. Write the usual preamble, and then I will tell you what I wish done with the bank stock that still stands in my name."

Whitney obeyed, and read over what he had written. "And now, for the gist of the thing, I hope you are going to do justice at last to—to those who have the best claims upon you."

The sunken eyes of the old man flashed beneath the heavy gray brows, and he slowly said:

"I understand you, but I recognise no claims but those of gratitude. In my decrepitude and loneliness, I found a good Samaritan, and to her I intend to bequeath every shilling I possess. I have six thousand pounds in stock, and I wish it to be settled on Mrs. Ashford. The income from it is not much, but it will make her independent of her husband."

"It will only be bequeathing to her a bone of contention between them," said the lawyer, with some heat, "and that man will end by making himself master of what rightfully belongs to others. A man may have the right to dispose of what he earns himself, Mr. Falconer, but this money came to you by descent, and it should go to those of your own blood. When you meet your father and your grandfather in the other world, don't you think they will reproach you for alienating the last fragment of the family fortune from your legal heirs?"

"Who are my legal heirs? I know nothing of them. If such beings are in existence, I have never had the honour of their acquaintance. If I had, however, it would make no difference, for I swore long ago, that my daughter, and her children, should never touch a penny belonging to me. I have never swerved from my determination, nor will anything you can say move me to do so. You have your instructions—carry them out without delay, and as to Ashford getting control of this money, you can bind it in such a way that he can never touch it. That is my wish, for I have little faith in such a man as I know him to be."

The little lawyer arose, and walked the floor in much excitement. When he had sufficiently controlled himself, he again approached the bed and gravely said:

"Mr. Falconer, you are preparing for the great change which must soon come; you are going before him to whom we pray for forgiveness as we have forgiven. What will you say, what can you offer in your own defence, if you die with this sin upon your soul? It was terrible to cast your child away from you as you did; but it is even worse to perpetrate the wrong, by refusing to recognise the claims of—of those she left behind her."

"That is all nonsense, Whitney. You don't suppose that I am to be frightened by holding before me the terrors of a future in which I have little faith? But we won't discuss points of religious belief, if you please. I sent for you to perform a service for me, and I wish it done without farther parley. If you know anything of these lawful heirs of mine, I do not care to hear it. Give my money to Mrs. Ashford, and be

done with it. Leave it in the hands of trustees for her benefit, for she shall have every shilling of it, I am resolved."

Mr. Whitney looked at him a few moments as if uncertain what course to take. If the old man had looked more like dying, he might have refused to make the will, in the belief that before another lawyer could be found, Mr. Falconer would pass away, leaving his small inheritance to be claimed by his natural heirs. But he thought him far stronger than he really was, and with a sigh the lawyer resumed his seat, and said:

"It must be as you will, I suppose; but if you would listen to me, I could tell you that which might soften your heart, and make you anxious to provide for a helpless being who claims descent from yourself. I know of one such—the last of your branch of the Falconer family, and this money would save her from dependence on others."

"With the craven blood of that man, Hurst, in her veins, do you dare to advocate her claims," exclaimed the old man, in a burst of impotent fury. "Attend to the business I sent for you to perform, sir, and cease to meddle with what does not concern you. I understand my own wishes, and they shall be carried out to the letter."

Whitney flushed deeply, and opened his lips to reply, but a glance at the worn face, so haggard, yet so fierce and resolute, restrained him. Angry as he was, he was filled with compassion for this hard and unforgiving nature, which even on the verge of death refused to repent and condone his past harshness. He only said:

"I will do your bidding, Mr. Falconer; but in the event of Mrs. Ashford's decease, how is this money to descend?"

"To her daughter as her natural heir, of course, but her father is to have no control over it. Yet stay—I forgot, there is another child to be thought of. A curious thing happened here this morning. A little girl was found at the door; there was a letter with money in it found in the basket in which she was placed, and a promise was made of more in the future. I have no faith in such promises—those who cast her off, meant to rid themselves of her finally, but they sent a sop to Cerberus in the hope that if once taken into the house she would not be thrust out of it again."

He paused to gain breath, and Whitney evidently listened with eager interest. He only said:

"Such things do happen sometimes; though Ashford is not the sort of man to accept such a waif unless it be to his interest to do so."

"You understand him, then—his wife is a tender-hearted goose, who is always ready to sacrifice herself for others. She has been a good providence to me, and I mean to reward her. She wishes to keep this child, why I know not, except that its helplessness has appealed to her feminine instincts. She told me she had taken a fancy to it, so I suppose it is pretty—women are such soft-hearted dunces where babies are concerned; but somehow I liked her better for it, and I told her she should have the power to keep it, even if the promised annuity failed. I wish my little fortune to be placed in trust for her, that she may use the proceeds for the rearing and education of both her own daughter and this adopted one. At her decease the money is to be equally divided between the two children, if such be her own wish. If not, she may have the power to bequeath the whole of it to either one as she may see fit, I suppose this can be done. You and Melrose can be named as trustees."

The face of the little lawyer underwent a singular change as he listened; it brightened sensibly, as he briskly answered:

"Of course—of course it can be done, sir—I shall use my best legal ability to make your wishes clear. But I must say that you are very kind to think of the forlorn little creature left here in so strange a manner this morning. You don't believe in a good Providence, but I do; and this is one of its most singular manifestations. He who has the angels of little children always before him, has doubtless moved your heart in favour of this one. It is a good deed, a righteous deed, sir, and I will carry out your wishes without farther delay."

Mr. Falconer did not remark the change in his manner, and he scarcely listened to his words. The scraping of the lawyer's pen as he rapidly wrote was the only audible sound for many moments, and at the end of half-an-hour he pronounced the will ready for signature.

When he read it over to the testator, Mr. Falconer asked in some surprise:

"How did you know the names of the children? Fantasia never gets her true name, and that of the other child I do not remember having mentioned."

The lawyer seemed taken aback for an instant, but he recovered himself, and coolly said:

"I have long known that Ashford's child is called

Fantasia, and you know I talked with him this morning before I came in here. Of course, such an event as happened here so lately would not be passed over without mention. Violet Ashford I have called the infant and that is henceforth to be her name, I suppose."

This ready reply disarmed such suspicions as might have been arising in the old man's mind, and he feebly said:

"It is all right, I believe—call in Ashford and his wife, that they may act as witnesses—but do not suffer him to have a glimpse of the contents of that paper. I wish I could have bequeathed her four times as much; that she might leave him, and find peace at last without him. He is a wretched brute; and now I am going, you must look a little after this woman and the two children. I am afraid they will need a friend outside of this house. As one of her trustees you—can do so—and Melrose, who is the other, can be a good friend to her, if he will."

"Oh, we shall do our duty, be sure of that. Clement Melrose is an honourable and true man, and I am certain he will not refuse to act with me for the benefit of Mrs. Ashford and her young charge."

"I hope not—though I have repelled his friendly advances; he is too good a man to resent that after I am gone. He may think it strange that I selected him as one of Mrs. Ashford's trustees, but I think I have a claim upon him that he will understand. Call in those people, for I am beginning to sink into the faithless gulf that is ready to swallow me. Annihilation is approaching—I feel as if each passing moment is robbing me of a portion of the vital spark we call life."

Mr. Whitney glanced at his face, and saw that a great change had suddenly passed over it. The features seemed to have collapsed, and a gray tinge had spread over his pallid complexion.

"Bless my soul, he was right after all, and he will die to-day," thought Mr. Whitney; "there is little time to lose, indeed."

He bustled out of the room, and in a few moments returned, accompanied by Ashford and his wife. The latter was frightened and fearful, as she drew near the bed and took the hand of the old man in her own, he feebly said:

"I shall go at the hour named; but don't—don't get hysterical over me—I can't bear weeping, and wailing, and death is the best friend to a poor, helpless wretch like me. Raise me up a little. I have a paper to sign, which you and your husband must witness."

Mrs. Ashford made an effort to repress her emotion, and with the assistance of Mr. Whitney he was placed in a sitting position. He grasped the pen that was placed in his fingers, and wrote his name with perfect clearness at the bottom of the page that was laid before him. He then said: "This is my last will and testament; and I hope the person whom I have endowed with all my worldly wealth, will use my small bequest well and wisely, which is more than I have done with the larger means confided to my keeping. Mr. Ashford, you will oblige me by placing your signature to this paper—the name of your wife will also be needed, as two witnesses are required."

Ashford started eagerly forward, but Mr. Whitney waved him back, took the will, and folded it down in such a manner that he could gain no glimpse of its contents, pointed to the place for his name, as he placed it on the table.

With a sanctimonious air, put on for the occasion, Ashford took the pen and dashed off his signature in a flowing hand, that of his wife in small, but clear characters, was placed after it, and Mr. Whitney sealed, and endorsed the document.

A gleam of satisfaction came from the sunken eyes of the dying man, and he faintly said:

"I have finished all that was left for me to do on earth, and I am ready for the last sleep; the best of all, for it is broken by no feverish unrest—troubled by no dreams."

Ashford raised his voice, and said:

"Oh, my dear sir, don't lay that flattering unction to your soul in this solemn hour. You will not, in your extremity, refuse to receive such religious consolation as you so surely need."

A bitter smile curled the blue lips of Mr. Falconer, and with sarcastic emphasis, he said:

"I have heard of the evil one reproving sin, and it is exemplified here. I don't want your ministrations, Ashford, though I should not object to having a prayer said over me by so good a woman as your wife. We are all in the dark as to what is to come hereafter, but there may be something in the teachings so many believe—yes, there may be, after all; but coming from your lips, I would reject the most consoling precepts of Christianity. Leave me, if you please, but suffer your wife to remain near me while consciousness lasts."

Ashford's face darkened, but he moved towards

the door; shaking his head, and speaking in a low tone to Mr. Whitney, he said:

"His mind wanders, or he would not have uttered such words to me. It is all over with him, and he will go down to the bottomless pit in a few more hours. It is sad—sad—but a life like his could scarcely be expected to end otherwise."

"There is hope for the sinner that repenteth even at the eleventh hour," replied the lawyer, in the same tone. "It will be best for you to leave him to Mrs. Ashford and myself."

When Mr. Whitney returned to the bedside, he found Mrs. Ashford kneeling beside it, weeping and praying alternately; her words were nearly inaudible, he raised his own voice, and repeated the prayers for the dying with such tender pathos that the old man unclosed his eyes again, and breathed the last words his lips ever uttered:

"Thank you. Heaven will hear, and—and forgive me all my—my—"

The fluttering utterance ceased, and he sank into insensibility. All effort to restore consciousness failed, and as the clock in the hall rung the hour of noon, a slight convulsion passed over Mr. Falconer's face, and all was over.

When satisfied that nothing more could be done for him, Mrs. Ashford wiped away her tears, and made an effort to compose her feelings before she again appeared in the presence of her husband. She dimly felt that the presence of this old man in the house had been a protection to her, and now he was gone, there would be no check on the coarse and violent man who was so unfortunate as to claim for her husband. She feared him now far more than she had ever loved him; but she still clung to the belief that some seed of good remained in him, which under the religion he professed, would yet blossom and bear fruit—she would not think him a hypocrite, though his conduct towards the outside world contrasted so forcibly with his rude and overbearing manners to those in his own home.

Mr. Whitney took upon himself the arrangements for the funeral. Jonah, an old gray-haired servant, was summoned to assist in preparing Mr. Falconer for the grave, and, clothed in his ordinary garb, he was laid upon a wide sofa in his own apartment till the undertaker could arrive with the coffin.

In the meantime Mrs. Ashford had visited her chamber, and found her new inmate on the eve of awakening from the deep slumber into which she had been thrown. As she bent over the bed, the child unclosed her eyes, looked dreamily at her, and said:

"Take me up, Judy, please. I've slept long enough."

She spoke quite distinctly, and with the accent of a child with whom great care had been taken to give an accurate pronunciation.

"Yes, my dear—I came to take you to your breakfast. It is nearly one o'clock, and you must be very hungry."

The strange voice startled the little creature, and she sprang up and looked wildly around her. With a doleful cry she said:

"You're not Judy, and this is not my aunty's room. Go away, please, I don't want you to touch me."

"But, my dear, I must. There's nobody to do anything for you. You have come to live with me now, and be my little girl."

At this incomprehensible announcement, the child hushed her sobs, and looked wild and frightened. She presently said:

"I don't want to be your little girl, and I won't stay here. Judy shall come and take me away at once."

"But, my child, Judy is not here, and I do not know where to find her. The fairies brought you here, while you were asleep, and gave you to me. I mean to keep you, and be a good mother to you."

At this the child set up a shrill cry, which brought Ashford to the scene of action.

"What does this mean? Why do you have such a disgraceful uproar, while death is in the house. I must say that you have shown your usual want of tact in getting the child in a fury, as soon as you have spoken to her. I thought you, at least, knew something about the management of children."

"I shall do well enough with her after she gets used to me," was the meek reply. "The poor thing is naturally fractious at finding herself among strangers. We must have patience with her at first."

"Oh, I daresay, and let you spoil her as you have your own; but I'll have none of that. Here, you young castaway, hush! or I'll shake you till you have no breath left to squall with."

The child looked into his frowning face, and the cries were frozen on her lips. With the quick instinct of her years, she saw that he was quite in earnest, and she put out her arms to Mrs. Ashford, as if asking protection from the threatened chastisement.

"There—she will be good now—I know she will," said that lady, placing her on the floor. "Come now, my little lady, and have a cup of milk and bread for



your breakfast. It is all ready and waiting for you."

Violet was only too anxious to escape from the vicinity of the dark man who had so thoroughly alarmed her, and she clung to the kind hand that led her away, with a sense of safety in its tender clasp.

Afraid to cry out again, she ate what had been prepared for her, with an appetite that did not seem to be affected by the strange position in which she had found herself. Too young to reason or comprehend what had befallen her, she seemed half-reconciled already to the changed circumstances of her life.

When the repast was nearly completed, Fantasia came dancing in, and flying to the stranger, threw her arms around her, and kissed her again and again.

"Oh, what a pretty little girl! Aint she sweet? I love her ever so much already."

"That is right, dear; you must be her elder sister, you know, and be good and kind to her."

"But will she stay here always?"

"There, my love, don't stifle Violet with your caresses. She seems to be tired of them, and it will be bad for us all if she cries out again."

The little girl received the advances of Fantasia with shyness, and was evidently unaccustomed to such violent demonstrations of affection; but she submitted to them without resistance, and with the freemasonry of childhood, the two were soon on good terms.

Fantasia took her to a retired nook, in which her own shabby playthings were collected, and with the happy facility of infancy, the little stranger was soon contented with the new phase her young life had assumed.

Mr. Whitney came into the family room a few moments before he left, and his face brightened as he saw the two children playing amiably together.

"So your little charge is awake, Mrs. Ashford. I am glad to see that she and Fanny are good friends already; I wish you would call her to your side a moment, for I wish to take a good look at her."

Mrs. Ashford hastened to lead the child towards him, and when she saw him she said:

"Where's Judy? I want Judy—oh, oh!" and a faint sorrowful wail followed the words.

"Why does she ask you for her nurse, Mr. Whitney? Has the little thing ever seen you before? It seems to me she knows you."

"Nonsense! I dare say she said the same thing to you the moment she opened her eyes. How should I know anything of this poor little foundling? I am interested in her, by what the old gentleman told me about her advent here, and your wish to keep her with you. By the way, I will tell you in confidence, that he provided the means to enable you to do so. When the will is proved, you will know all about it; but I thought I might cheer you up a little with this hint of the good fortune that awaits you."

In place of looking elated, Mrs. Ashford seemed alarmed. She deprecatingly said:

"Oh, I hope he hasn't left me anything. What is the use? I—I couldn't do as I please with it—and I should have to give it up, as I have all the rest, even if my conscience went against it."

"We shall see about that Mrs. Ashford; we lawyers have a way of doing things that sometimes baffles cupidity and hard dealings, even towards so defenceless a being as a wife against her lord and master. I shall not tell you any more now, but you will know all about it in good time."

After a pause, she said, with a sigh:

"It won't make me happier, I am afraid, even if it be as you say. You don't know—you can't know how I feel about anything that may cause ill-feelings between myself and my husband. He is a peculiar person, and—difficult to understand—but I don't mean to complain of him. Don't think that, Mr. Whitney, for such a thing would be the basest domestic treachery in me."

"I know—I understand that a wife is always bound to screen her husband's faults as far as lies in her power—but I understand Ashford as well as if I had lived in the same house with him a dozen years. I am the guardian of your interests in this affair, and you shall have the benefit of this legacy in spite of him. I must go now, but I shall be back in time for the funeral to-morrow, and Mrs. Whitney will come over in the morning. I hope that your new charge will not prove troublesome—she is a pretty, winsome little creature, and will be a nice companion for Fanny."

"She seems quiet enough, and I think she will soon reconcile herself to her new home; I will try to do the best I can for her."

"I know that you will, Mrs. Ashford. I have great faith in your kindness of heart, and so had the old gentleman who has gone from among us. Good-morning, ma'am, I have a great deal to attend to, and I must be going."

He patted the child on the head, then stooped and

kissed her as if some impulse moved him to do so. He muttered inaudibly:

"Poor, little, forsaken creature—thrust away by those allied to you by blood, your lot is to live among strangers—but they will be better to you than your own kindred, and heaven will take care of the little wail cast so early on the turbid waters of life, to sink or swim, as fate may direct. They would be glad if it were the first, but I will take care that shall not come to pass."

Violet clung to his hand, and again piteously said: "Send me Judy—where is Judy?"

"How can I, my dear? This lady here, will be more to you than Judy ever was, if you are a good child; she loves little girls, and with her you'll soon forget all about Judy."

"No, I won't—and I won't stay here."

She threw herself on the floor, crying again as if her heart would break.

"There, there, take her up, Mrs. Ashford, please, and do the best you can to soothe her. She'll soon come round and cling to you as fondly as she did to the woman she wails after, now. I really must be going."

Mr. Whitney hurried from the house, mounted his horse, and rode away. He had no sooner disappeared than Ashford came in from the adjoining room, through the half-opened door of which he had watched the scene that had just passed.

He roughly said:

"Pick up that young one, and set her on that high chair, she may do penance there, and if I hear a chirp from her, it won't be good for her, so you understand, miss? You are to be as mute as a mouse, or you'll get something more than a shake."

Mrs. Ashford silently placed the infant culprit on the seat indicated, and the child hushed her sobs and swallowed her tears, in her great terror of the man who asserted such authority over her. Violet lifted her blue eyes timidly to his face, but dropped them instantly, and her lips quivered with the effort she made to repress the frightened cry that arose to them, for Ashford's face was set and stern; but it suddenly changed its expression as he caught the alarmed glance of those deep blue orbs; and he hurriedly said:

"Good heavens! that child's face is as familiar to me as my own. The likeness cannot be accidental. She must be the daughter of one of my early pupils. I never before saw such eyes in any head but in that of Ellinor Wentworth. They are of that peculiar violet hue that is so rare—and now I remember, she had a passion for violets, and that is how the child came by her uncommon name."

Mrs. Ashford smiled faintly, and said:

"That is the young lady you once told me of. You were turned away from the house, I believe, because you betrayed how much in love with her you were. But this poor child can scarcely be her daughter. The Wentworths were rich, and not likely to desert their own offspring."

"That is true enough, but it gives me a clue that I will follow up, and if there be a reason for putting the child out of the way, I will be roundly paid for keeping their secret. I am not going to connive at villany without going shares in the spoil."

"How can you talk so, Mr. Ashford? I can't believe that you are in earnest. You say those dreadful things only to excite me."

He shrugged his shoulders, and with a laugh, said:

"Of course, it's only for that. I am a good Christian man, and I'm not going to do evil that good may come of it, either to you or myself. But, of course, I shall try to find out something about this child. It would be strange if I did not, under all the circumstances. I believe Whitney knows more about her than he is willing to acknowledge, and I mean to put the screws on him the first chance I get. The letter that came with the child was written in a disguised hand, but it was his. I knew it as soon as I saw the writing on that will. He has a peculiar twist to his g's and y's that he forgot to leave out."

Mrs. Ashford did not express her own suspicions that the lawyer knew more than he thought fit to reveal, for such impression was strongly fixed on her mind. She only said:

"You will never get anything out of him that he does not choose to tell you. All we have to do is to take care of Violet, and receive the money for doing so. The burden will be mine, but you will get the pay, and that, I suppose, will satisfy you."

Ashford turned on her angrily:

"Do you mean that as a taunt, madam? If I do take care of our means, and economise in every way, is it not for our mutual benefit? If women had their way, every shilling a man could earn would be spent on finery and foolishness. You have a roof over your head—respectable clothes to wear, and the best of food to live on. What then are you hinting at? By heavens! it is enough to make a man swear, to have such a woman as you to deal with!"

Mrs. Ashford was nervous, and easily frightened, and he knew that this blustering tone always overcame such resistance as she might attempt to offer to his tyranny. She shrank away from him, and feebly said:

"Don't be harsh with me to-day, Apollo, for I have had a good deal to try me, and I feel as if I cannot stand much more. I did not mean to offend you."

"What did you mean, then? You are a pining, sentimental idiot—that is what you are, and a discontented one to boot—but I shouldn't expect idiots to know what is good for themselves, or to understand the management of property. Other people have confidence in me, but my own wife chooses to think that I am unworthy of it. I intend to hold on to the little we've got, and make more out of it. When I am rich enough to do as I please, you'll find out why I have hoarded every shilling and much good may the knowledge do you!"

Mrs. Ashford's lips were white, but her voice was firm and metallic as she said:

"You are a man whose hateful nature is unfit to deal with women and children. This child is mine, and I am responsible for her health and reason. If you ever lay the weight of your hand upon her in unkindness again I will take her, and go far away from you, where you can never find either of us. I hope you fully understand me, Hiram Ashford."

With a sneer, he replied:

"I hope I do, for nothing would suit me better than such an evasion; I should be rid of the burden I am weary of bearing, and the world would cast no blame on me. Do you know you almost offer me a premium to strike the little torment again?"

"You had best not attempt it," she quietly said.

"Whatever you may contemplate in the future, you are not yet quite ready for the separation you seem to desire. When you have scraped together a few more thousands, you may be willing to leave me to poverty and peace; the last will be welcome, for I have known little enough of it during all the years I have been your wife."

Ashford assumed an injured look, and he spoke as if deeply hurt by her words:

"My temper will get the better of me, Cherub; and I say and do things I am sorry for afterwards; but I am sure you have no right to judge me so hardly as that. If our life together has been rather stormy, we can try and make it better in the future. You were very fond of me once, you know, and I'm often irritable because you no longer seem to have any feeling but dread when I am with you. I know its my temper that causes all the mischief; but you know that I am trying to subdue it as a good Christian man should, and if I ever do get the better of the old Adam in me, it will be through the influence of so good a wife as you are. You know the promise given that 'the believing wife shall save the unbelieving husband'—not that I am that, for you know I belong to the church; but I often feel as if I am the unworthy lamb of the flock."

Nothing, certainly, could have been less lamblike than that dark, saturnine face, as it craftily regarded the pale, fixed one before him. Ashford knew that such confessions had always mollified his wife, on the rare occasions on which she had turned upon him and rebelled against his iron rule. They had less effect now, and with a sigh, she said:

"Yes, you are right, the love that casteth out fear is no longer mine for you. I trusted my life to your keeping, and you have made it a dreariness to me. But I will not reproach you with your hardness to myself; I only insist that these little children—both of them, mind—shall not, in future, suffer from your outbursts of temper. My power, such as it is, shall be used to protect them, and if I can influence you to any good purpose, I shall be thankful to Him who can change the hardest heart. I do not forget that I am bound to cling to you as long as it is possible for me to do so, but I have indicated the limit of my endurance, and you must respect it."

The dignity with which she spoke was something quite new to him, and as she passed into her own chamber, carrying both the sobbing children with her, Ashford moodily muttered:

"Confound the woman! I do believe that she has a shrewd guess as to my intentions."

(To be continued.)

WHERE ARE WE?—"Man is a microcosm—a world in himself," I have heard an acquaintance exclaim. "Only to think," he continued, one day, "what imposters we are! Here am I, Will Morton, deluding myself and other people into the belief that I have lived in the world five-and-thirty years. No such thing. Where was I last year at this time? My dear friend, don't let us deceive ourselves. Your chum, Will Morton, as he now exists, was scattered all over the world twelve months ago. That part of his body which he owes to wheat was grow-

ing ripe for the sickle in America or Russia; that part of which is due to tea was flourishing in a vegetable state upon the slopes of the Himalayas or in China. The beef packed upon his bones was munching grass in Lincolnshire, the mutton wandering over the South Downs, the pork wallowing in a sty after its kind; and who shall say whence came the fish that he has eaten, or what he owes in personal appearance to the Indies and to Africa in the matter of sugar and Christmas puddings. I tell you, sir, the Will Morton of to-day was at that time non-existent, and only lives, moves, and has his being now, in virtue of having been gathered together from the four winds of heaven. He has been pieced up out of an oyster here, a codfish there, a bullock yonder; and who knows how much of him lay hidden in old clothes, ground bones, and whatever else is thrown upon the earth to make it productive."

## SOMETIMES SAPPHIRE SOMETIMES PALE.

BY J. R. LITTLEPAGE.

### CHAPTER XXV.

Thy numbers. Jealousy, to nought were fixed,  
Sad proof of thy distressful state;  
Of differing themes, the veering song was mixed,  
And now it courted Love, now, raving, called on Hate.  
*Coltine's Ode to "The Passions."*

AGAINST the wall, crouching on its haunches was a fearful-looking being, part human, part animal, part demon, so it seemed to Earnshaw. The creature was clothed in rags, its long black hair hung down to its shoulders, its claw-like hands were outspread, as if it feared an attack, or meditated an assault. The face, deadly white, looked up into that of the young tutor with wild, angry, yet frightened eyes. Earnshaw approached the creature, and clutched its shoulder with a firm hand. It arose to its feet, and uttered the most unearthly yell that ever vibrated through the walls of human habitation. It was like the roused savage cry of a beast of prey.

With a strength that seemed superhuman, the thing wrenched itself from the iron clasp of Earnshaw's muscular hands, then backed to the wall more closely, and looked up at the young man, with eyes that glowed like balls of red fire.

Evidently the creature meditated an attack. Earnshaw stood upon the defensive, and returned the gaze of the monster with one as unflinching and as determined. Then the tutor spoke:

"What are you?" he asked, loudly.

The creature answered by a laugh; the most horrible laugh that Earnshaw had ever listened to. It sounded like an evil chuckle, hoarse, deep, mocking, threatening. Not a word escaped the lips of the creature while Earnshaw looked at it. The thing made a sudden dash at him, knocked the light out of his hand, and then rushed past him in the darkness. Earnshaw followed, he could hear the steps on the stone flags of the deserted corridor, then a door was banged to at the extremity of the passage, silence followed, silence amid the darkness, and Earnshaw was mad with himself for his folly in being off his guard, and suffering the unearthly-looking creature to escape him.

"There is something mysterious here," mused the young man. "Something unnatural, which it seems to me ought to be explained. Can this creature, who haunts the deserted, uninhabited rooms of this castle, who occasionally even intrudes into the presence of Cathleen, and terrifies her almost to death, can this be a man who, for some purpose of his own, keeps up the character of a ghost, so that he may inhabit some of these rooms unmolested, and pay no rent? I have heard of such things! Were Dungarvon Towers near the sea, I should suppose that this was a smuggler who concealed his bales of goods in those empty rooms, and escaped with them by some subterranean passage. But we are here many miles from the coast. No, I will speak myself to old Mr. Lamotte in the morning. I think, as the head of the house, he ought to know something about this disagreeable apparition, who haunts the mansion."

Earnshaw had by this time reached his own chamber, he locked his door, stirred the dying embers of his fire into a blaze, and lighted a lamp which stood upon the mantel-shelf. Then he sat down and looked at the burning coals, and ruminated upon the events of the day. How intoxicating to the young man was the memory of the witchery and the fascinations of Miss Lamotte; either she was the most desperate and heartless coquette who ever degraded the noble name of woman, or else she loved him—loved him with fervour, loved him as he had dreamed of being loved in the half-forgotten days of his dreaming boyhood.

"And how unfortunate it was," mused Earnshaw, half aloud, while he stirred his fire again, that he

might find employment for his restless hands. "How unfortunate that Miss Leech should have come up just at that moment; could there have been design in it?"

Earnshaw balanced the poker upon his wrist while he debated this point with himself; but he found it impossible to arrive at any conclusion whatever regarding either Cathleen, Miss Leech, or the creature which haunted the uninhabited portions of the castle; and the young man retired to rest, with his brain disturbed by fancies, hot, wild, feverish, which rendered his sleep unrefreshing, and his dreams monstrous.

The next morning, the table in the great hall was crowded with the guests who were visiting at the castle, a merry, chattering, laughing party. Earnshaw sat silent at an obscure part of the table. There was a large stone pillar at the right side of him, and a heavy, broad old gentleman at the left, for the table happened to be placed awkwardly close to the pillars which supported the roof of the hall. It thus happened that Earnshaw was almost hidden; but he could watch Cathleen very well, though he believed himself unobserved by her. Miss Lamotte was placed next to Lord Beechfield, the old earl paid her the most marked attention, and Cathleen received it with gracious, winning smiles; smiles whose honied sweetness acted like poisonous gall upon the excited spirit and fevered heart of the unhappy Earnshaw.

The young man's eyes blazed with an anger which he hardly cared to conceal, the red blood mounted to his dark cheek and stained it with a crimson dye.

"She is utterly, utterly heartless," muttered Earnshaw, to himself, "not one look for me! not one smile for me! And last night, who would not have sworn that she meditated giving up wealth, rank, everything, for my sake, for mine, the poor tutor's—and see her now."

His lip curled with the intensity of the scorn which filled his tortured heart.

Miss Lamotte, raising her eyes suddenly at that moment to his face, encountered such a withering look, such a fierce, dark flash, that she shrank within herself and wondered.

"Mercenary schemer," mused the heiress, "he is annoyed that I pay attention to 'my lord,' oh, he will see more of it, and before this day is over I will let him know that I have read his mean entries in the pocket-book."

When the breakfast was over, Cathleen paused as she passed Earnshaw. She was leaning lightly upon the arm of Lord Beechfield. A creature more bewitchingly beautiful than the heiress, in her dark blue morning robe, trimmed with white fur, her raven hair wreathed about her superb head, a glow upon her fair cheek, a light, tremulous, yet warm, in her large eyes, it were impossible to imagine or to dream of.

"Truly, she is like a houri out of paradise!" muttered Earnshaw.

Yet he returned her bright glance with one of gloom, almost of anger. She paused by his side. The memory of the cruel words of contempt which she had read in the pocket-book was ranking in poor Cathleen's soul. In Earnshaw, she saw a man hard, selfish, and heartless, who despised her, but coveted her fortune. She resolved now to show him the fallacy of his hopes, she determined upon a revenge which should sting and humiliate him to the quick.

"Where are the servants?" she said, carelessly looking at Earnshaw, as if he were a footman. "Oh, you will do as well! Go and bring Lord Beechfield's overcoat from his room. He can't walk round the grounds without it this morning. We are going for a stroll."

Earnshaw turned pale under the insult. He looked at Cathleen until she quailed beneath the concentrated wrath and scorn of his eyes. Raising a small hand-bell, he rang it loudly through the hall. A man answered the summons.

"Peterson," he said, "I believe Miss Lamotte has some orders for you."

Then he bowed deeply to Miss Lamotte, with the grace of a young prince, and walked slowly away.

"How magnificent he looks in his wrath," mused Cathleen. "Oh, how I love him! How I love him in spite of all, notwithstanding his mercenary conduct and the bitter fact that he despises and hates me. Oh, I could kill myself to think that I have wounded that manly soul, made him hate me more—more completely than before. I would give up everything I possess if I might but unsay that wicked speech of two moments since."

It happened then that Lord Beechfield was compelled to give his orders respecting the greatcoat to Peterson himself; nor did Cathleen walk with her promised husband in the grounds. She soon pleaded headache, and retired to her room.

Earnshaw, meanwhile, wandered about in the shrubberies that wintry morning, without knowing or caring what he was doing, or whether he was going.

"I shall leave Dungarvon," he muttered to himself, fiercely. "I will not any longer subject myself to the caprice of that insulting girl."

While the young man was in this angry frame of mind, walking up and down under the leafless trees, not knowing how wild and woe-begone was his appearance, a sudden turn in the path brought him face to face with Mr. John Gollon, the solicitor, the guardian of his childhood, the friend of his manhood—ever the friendly counsellor in times of anxiety and suffering.

"Why, bless my heart," cried the lawyer, "how sad you look, Earnshaw; what has transpired, my dear boy?"

"Nothing," returned the young man, hastily, "nothing, that is, which ought, in all sober reason, to disturb my repose of mind for one single moment."

"Ah; but the question is not what ought to disturb your mind, but what has done so; for I never, in all my life, saw a more troubled and—excuse me, dear boy—angry face—nay, don't flush and flash, I speak in all kindness. Have you and Cathleen been quarrelling? Ah, ha, now I know what is the matter; cheer up, my dear lad, she'll be all smiles and sunshine to-morrow."

"Mr. Gollon," interrupted Earnshaw, "I beg you, as a friend, not to mention the name of that lady to me. She has amused herself since my arrival by attempting to inveigle me into a hopeless, mad attachment to herself; she has heaped alternately scorn and flattery upon me, until I have almost lost my senses between exhilaration and shame. She has this day insulted me publicly, in a manner both unfeminine and ungenerous, and all this, Mr. Gollon, totally unprovoked on my part. I have nothing to reproach myself with, save the common fault of having been too easily led captive by her beauty. But I have scarcely ever dared to breathe a compliment into her ear."

Earnshaw paused, and Mr. Gollon whistled loud and shrill through the shrubberies.

"Well," he said at last, "I won't interfere; I won't talk any more to you now about this saucy Cathleen, since I perceive it is, just at present, a painful subject. But you must know that I came here to see Lamotte especially about some law business, and they have invited me to remain for the ball, theatricals, and fun of the next fortnight; it is generally my way, however, to mingle business with pleasure, and I thought I would talk a little to you about your affairs, and let you slightly into the secret which surrounds the marriage of your parents. I believe, Earnshaw, that I have found a clue, and that I am now, at last, on the right track."

Earnshaw looked up quickly, and his lip curled while his eye flashed.

"I am more anxious, Mr. Gollon," he said, passionately, "ten thousand times more anxious than when I last saw you, to establish my claim to what the world calls honour and worth. Oh, sir, I have learned bitter lessons since I came to Dungarvon Towers. I have learned that knowledge and the gifts of intellect, a pure life, an unselfish aim, a love of duty and an earnest faith in what is right, avail nothing in the eyes of fashionable men and women. Let me be known as the legitimate heir to a man of wealth and title, and all these paltry worshippers of this world's dross will bow down to me as the sheaves of Joseph's brothers bowed down to the sheaf of Joseph in his dream."

"You are unreasonable, my boy," laughed the lawyer; "you say that these worshippers of this world's dross are paltry, and yet you covet this dross, and you desire the adulation of these worshippers. You are in love, my boy, hopelessly in love with this Cathleen Lamotte, whom I shall lecture well for her unkindness."

"For heaven's sake, no," implored the young man, vehemently, "I tell you she told me this very morning to go and bring a coat from the room of that ugly old lord whom she is about to marry. She asked where the servants were; seeing me, she added: 'you will do as well, go to my lord's room and bring his coat.'"

"But that is not like Cathleen," said Mr. Gollon, musingly, "she was never given to insult those beneath her. I am sure she was angry and sore at heart when she gave you that insolent order. Can anybody have made mischief between you, do you think?"

Earnshaw shook his head.

"Even if it be so," he said, "Miss Lamotte had no right to insult me in the manner in which she did. No, Mr. Gollon, let the name of this proud dame be no more mentioned between us; but tell me quickly of this clue which you say you have found; what shape has it taken?—a street beggar, a discovered likeness, a register of birth, marriage, or baptism?"

"None of those as yet," returned Mr. Gollon. "I am almost afraid to tell you how slight is the trace I have discovered; but let us walk more briskly, the day is bitterly cold and we have been loitering under



these leafless branches as if it were balmy June instead of bleak December. Now then, you must know that, about a fortnight since, I had occasion in my professional capacity to visit a lunatic asylum. When I had completed the business which took me there, the physician who was at the head of the house asked me if I would like to see the patients and form my own opinion of his method of treatment. I at once consented, and he led me through several rooms of his large airy house, which is pleasantly situated on the banks of the Thames. I found a number of very cheerful-looking ladies and gentlemen, some of them playing cards, some practising music. One old gentleman I was particularly struck with. He sat in a low chintz-covered chair, close to a bright fire, in a small cosy parlour, alone; he was reading a large bible through gold-rimmed spectacles, his white hair was brushed away from his broad forehead. As I approached him he raised the mildest gray eyes I ever encountered in my life; his countenance was very meek, placid, and benevolent; there was, it is true, an expression somewhat vacant about the mouth, but there was a gleam of intelligence in the face which startled me, although it was as transitory as the flicker of a winter sunbeam. The old gentleman wore a clerical tie and his linen front was as spotless as snow.

"You are studying the best book, sir," I said, pointing to the bible.

"He at once placed it in my hands, saying:

"She gave it me herself, poor soul, after her marriage; you will see her maiden name on the fly-leaf."

"The large, loose, old cover fell back and you may imagine my surprise, my intense eager curiosity and interest, when I read on the page these words: 'Evangeline Rivers, aged seventeen, the gift of her affectionate father. Bycroft vicarage.'

"Sir, sir," I exclaimed, in deep excitement, 'I have been upon the track of that lady's antecedents for years; tell me, in heaven's name, where she was married, and to whom she was married?'

"I married her, sir," he said, 'but you see, I was bound over to secrecy, and when my head was injured in that fall from my horse in hunting, for, sir, I was a fox-hunting parson, though none the worse for that, let us hope, since I was prescribed violent exercise by my physician, when my head was injured, sir, my brain became slightly affected, and I was ordered to reside under the kind care of Doctor Dodd, and here I have lived fifteen years.'

"But my dear, good sir," I exclaimed, 'tell me at least your name and where your living was situated at the time that you performed the ceremony of holy wedlock between Evangeline Rivers, and some person unknown. I have searched almost every registry in England.'

"I verily believe, sir," said the old clergyman, in a most provokingly polite tone, 'I gave my most sacred word, both to poor Evangeline and to my lord, that the secret of their marriage should never pass my lips. I even cut the leaves out of the vestry book, and gave them in a tin box to my lord to keep. Soon after that sad thing happened, and she, poor soul, died abroad, as I have heard; but although she sleeps under a foreign soil, I will still respect and guard her secret, poor child.'

"But do you not perceive," I exclaimed, 'that whereas your silence was right in the days that are gone, that you are committing a deadly wrong by hiding the secret any longer. Evangeline left a lawful son, the rightful inheritor of land and title, which have been doubtlessly usurped by another. This son I have educated for the position which he ought of right to hold; but instead, he is a toiler, a dependant in a stranger's house; the years are running to waste the while I am seeking for this poor lad's rightful inheritance.' Earnshaw, I might as well have talked to the winds, the wild old lunatic was firm as a rock. He bowed to me blandly.

"Sir," he said to me, 'my word was passed, the word of a clergyman and a gentleman, and I cannot break it; no, sir, you shall walk over my dead body first.'

"Here Doctor Dodd interfered, begging me not to excite his patient.

"I will do what I can," said the doctor, sympathisingly, 'and perhaps if you brought the son of this lady here, he might be inclined to tell what he knows then.'

"Doctor Dodd told me the name of his eccentric old patient, the Rev. Joseph Harley of St. James's Church, in the Parish of St. Pancras. Now I have searched every register in that parish, and my only hope is that you will be able to extort the secret from him."

Earnshaw looked thoughtful.

"We are upon the eve of the discovery," he exclaimed, suddenly, 'something tells me so; but I have no hope of any aid whatever from the Rev. Joseph Harley.'

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Ah, fear! ah, frantic fear!

I see, I see thee near!

I know thy hurried step, thy haggard eye;

Like thee I start, like thee disordered fly!

For lo, what monsters in thy train appear!

Danger, whose limbs of giant mould,

What mortal eye can fixed behold!

Collins.

OSCAR ARKWRIGHT had been a silent and hidden observer of the scene between Cathleen Lamotte and Earnshaw at the breakfast table. Standing under the shadowy embrasure of the deep window, sheltered by the thick curtains of crimson silk, the young land-steward had been an amused witness of the bitter humiliation of his rival.

"It goes well," he muttered, to himself, as he sat alone in the small room which was devoted to his business occupations.

He was surrounded with bills, mortgages, and leases, all the *débris* of work, but he bent anxiously over the table, writing, and drawing queer caricatures upon the thick blotting-pad. He did not know what he was doing, perplexed thoughts chased one another through the dark, intricate chambers of his brain.

"The game is almost made," he muttered, "almost ready to my hand, but I lack the courage terribly at the last. I can endure the cold stare of haughty old Lamotte, I can listen to his bitter words with equanimity, I shall, above all things, rejoice in the punishment and humiliation of that detestable Mrs. Lamotte, but, oh, I dread the withering scorn of Cathleen. I can never humble her. It will be an awful moment when she comprehends for the first time that I—I intend to make her my wife. And yet am I not as well born as this tutor, about whose birth and parentage nothing is known? Am I not a doctor's son, the nephew of the rector? the handsomest fellow in three counties, and the cleverest? Shall I not make a magnificent country squire, when I ride to hounds on a three hundred guinea hunter, black as night, and as fleet as time? When I wear my scarlet suit and velvet cap, will not women's eyes brighten when they gaze on the handsome master of Dungarvon Towers? Why should she despise me? I wonder if it is instinct? Pahaw, I am talking like an old village crone. No, it is not instinct, it is a foolish romantic prejudice in favour of that gloomy Earnshaw. She loves him still, even now, completely, in spite of the pretty little story which Miss Leech and I have arranged for her benefit. It is absolute devotion on her part; devotion as wild, as complete, as senseless as the love of that foolish Kate for me."

His fair brow contracted as he muttered the name of his unhappy wife, and the azure light in his eyes burned pale. He rose and paced the room with hurried steps, clasping his hands before him, and staring blankly into vacancy.

"And to think that what the world calls love, forsooth, hurried me at nineteen into an insane marriage with a beggarly orphan, the niece, good lack, of Josh of the Mill! Oh, I must not allow squeamish conscience to interfere with me there!" continued the young man. "I must act, act, act!" he added, speaking, now, aloud, in his intense excitement.

He made a clutch at the empty air, laughed, and sat down.

"I ought to feel like Macbeth, I suppose," said Oscar, rubbing his hand over his eyes. "I ought to see all sorts of imaginary daggers before me; but I see nothing—I hear nothing, save the unappeasable cries of my ambitious soul. They shall be satisfied. And now what to do first? To break this news to Lamotte; make my demand; secure my bride; or get the other one out of the way."

He uttered those three words low, so low that they were hardly audible to his own ears.

"It is no use to delay," he exclaimed, at last, starting wildly to his feet, and stamping on the ground in his impatience. "She it is—that Kate—that wife, who, in reality, ties my tongue, delays my plans, fools and unnerves me, when I would speak to Lamotte, and tell him that I hold his life and his liberty in my grasp. Sometimes I have been weak enough to think that I would simply make a great demand, say for fifty thousand pounds, and let the girl go! But I am simply mad when I have those thoughts, for the income in rents is eighty thousand a year, and I aim at becoming a great English landowner, getting into Parliament, perhaps, into the Cabinet, who knows? There is no place in broad England where my ambition will cry stop; besides, I love this scornful Cathleen. She piques me, provokes me, gives flavour to the insipid monotony of this life. No, Kate must be removed, and now I must don courage like a plate armour, throw weak scruples to the north wind, shut my eyes to remorse, stifle the faint cries of that suffocating old woman, my conscience! Oscar Arkwright, a great destiny is yours! Take up your arms, and do battle with old prejudices—the admonitions of Sunday school teachers—the me-

mories of lessons at the mother's knee, and all the host of righteous teachings which are supposed to hold a man back from crime. They won't hold me. I am a bad fellow, and I know it, and I don't care." The wretched Oscar had indeed given himself up to the service of Satan, enrolled himself under the banner of the evil one.

He went straight into his room after he had held this long and evil communing with his own heart, and began to equip himself for a journey. He packed his portmanteau, wrapped himself in an overcoat, and put on thick boots. Then he went at once to Mr. Lamotte, and told him that an important letter, received that morning, called him up to London on very urgent business. A short time afterwards he was striding towards the Stone House, across the moors. He looked gallant and handsome enough for any prince, in the faint winter sunshine, albeit that he was carrying his portmanteau lightly balanced in his hand.

It was not Mr. Oscar's intention to show himself at the residence of old Mr. Grey. He did not the least meditate or purpose that his presence should be at all mixed up with the disappearance of Kate from St. Edmonds. He had told her some days before that she was to write a letter as though to herself, purporting to come from an aunt in London, inviting her to spend two months with her. If that letter were written, and had been received, and if Kate were ready and willing to follow him to London the next day, those arrangements could easily be made, which would put the power over Kate entirely into the hands of her wicked husband.

When Oscar drew near to the lane where the Stone House was situated, he stepped among some clustering trees, whose bare branches clattered drearily in the bitter wind. The grass was soaked with half-melted frost, the bleak common land lay out before him, a vista of wintry landscape, it met the cold blue sky in the distance; not a habitation was visible, only a weird old windmill, turning its arms about, far, far at the horizon's verge. A more desolate scene it would be very difficult to imagine, notwithstanding that the wintry sunshine gleamed, and the sky was faintly blue.

Oscar could just see the tall chimneys of the Stone House by turning on one side and peering through the branches.

"There is smoke coming out from the chimney at the back," he said to himself, "so that Mrs. Kate still keeps her room, I suppose. Presently, somebody will pass, by whom I may send a message."

But Oscar waited a long time, and nobody passed that way. He grew impatient.

"I must go up to the house," he muttered. "Afterwards, it would be horribly awkward if anybody remembered my having been seen there just the day before she leaves."

At this moment Oscar heard the dead leaves in the lane crackle under the feet of a horse; another moment and he saw his good uncle riding slowly and with lowered head in the road below.

"He has been to see old Grey," thought the young man; "and the old imbecile has been telling him his tale. I can read it in my uncle's whole attitude; the old man does not know what to think or what to believe. While he is making up his mind, I must step in and secure the prize. Oh, no time is to be lost."

The rector passed out of sight without having seen his nephew, and then, Oscar losing patience, was about to descend towards the house, when he was amazed at perceiving the slight figure of Kate, wrapped in a large gray shawl, hurrying along in the same direction that the rector had taken.

Three or four energetic strides brought the recreant husband to the side of the shrinking yet adoring wife. She uttered a cry, partly of fear, partly of surprise, partly of intense joy, at the sight of her handsome Oscar.

"What on earth are you masquerading about the roads for," he said, savagely, "the day is cold enough to chill your blood and freeze it into ice."

Her eyes now glistened with joy at his rough words, he did love her, then, a little, he cared whether she took cold or not, he did not wish her to die.

"Oh, Oscar, dearest," she said, clasping his hand fondly. "Poor grandfather is so odd and so distressed in his mind, he wants to tell the rector something, and the rector has just been praying with him; but there was something else he wanted to say, and so, since Mother Michael was out, I wrapped this shawl over me to run after him, and now you will go after him, will you not?"

"Most certainly I will," responded Oscar, who was secretly resolved to do nothing of the kind, but to keep the rector as much as possible from old Grey. "Most certainly I will; but it is fortunate that you are now strong enough to be out, since I am going to London, as I told you, to live for good, and I wish you to follow me in two days. Have you written that letter which I told you to write?"

"No, Oscar, it really seemed so deceitful, and—" He interrupted her with an impatient oath. "That is your obedience," he said. "Well, anyhow, you must follow me. I shall meet you at the Euston terminus, on Thursday night. You must bring old Michael with you, for you will want her assistance in a strange place. I have taken lodgings, and she will wait upon you."

"And there will be no need to tell untruths," said Kate. "I shall leave, as if of my own accord, to go and see my aunt at Upfield. Who need flout out that I am not there, Oscar, for a week at any rate? After then, perhaps, I may write to Uncle Josh and tell him the truth. May I—oh, may I, Oscar? You said some fearful things the other night, dearest, about killing yourself if I betrayed you, but I feel sure that to bear the secret much longer will kill me."

Kate, looking up into her husband's eyes, saw them turn pale—white—with the intensity of his feelings.

"You are angry," she said, laying her hand, with a gentle, imploring gesture, on his arm. "But it is not fair that I should be compelled always to bear this load of shame and suspicion."

He shook off her hand from his arm with a brutal roughness. Poor, thin, pretty little hand; two short years ago, and he would have given all he had in the world to induce that hand to rest caressingly upon his shoulder, and now the warm, clinging pressure enraged him. It seemed in its quiet tenacity to urge its claim upon him for protection and support, it was like a chain, small but strong, dragging him towards duty, and Oscar Arkwright hated duty.

"Why, in the name of pity," he burst forth, "do you persist in pawing me in that fashion publicly; if anybody passed by, a pretty fine state of affairs we should have. Now, for mercy's sake, don't cry, and stand here in the cold. Return to the house, pack up your things, leave here to-morrow for Upfield, and start by the afternoon train, which leaves the station at one-fifteen, that will bring you to Euston at half-past six, where I will meet you, and take you to the lodgings which I have taken; and then you must make up your mind to live the life of a poor man's wife, for neither of us will ever return to this country again."

"So that I am with you," sobbed the hapless young wife, "I shall be content."

"And bring old Mother Michael with you, will you?" continued Oscar, coldly. "I have no confidence whatever in London servants, and the old dame knows your ways, and can attend to all your wants."

"How kind you are, Oscar," said Kate, tremulously; "and now since I am still an invalid, I will go into the house and you will send the rector back to my grandfather."

"Certainly, I will," said Oscar, with a sardonic leer. "And now, Oscar, won't you kiss me, to say goodbye?" asked the young wife, timidly.

"Oh, what nonsense," he answered, lightly, touching her forehead with his lips. "Now, run back, and remember that to-morrow, at half-past six in the evening, I shall meet you at the Euston station."

Kate returned to the house, and to her grandfather, whom she succeeded in pacifying by a promise of the speedy arrival of the rector. Then she retired to her own room, sat down before her fire, shivered and wept, with an inward foreboding of the she knew not what. In the midst of her mourning, old Mrs. Michael returned and came hobbling into the room.

"What! crying, my pet?" she exclaimed, "tell me what it's all about; just because that good-for-nothing husband of yours has't been, I suppose."

"Oh, yes he has," replied Kate; "and then she told the old woman of the orders she had received from Oscar, that she and the old nurse were to travel to London the next day and meet him at the Euston station."

Mother Michael listened and a grin spread over her wide mouth.

"Did he say what wages I was to have, and who was to attend to the old master, and did he give you money for the journey?"

Poor Kate blushed deeply and was compelled to answer "No" to all three questions.

"Then, I'm blessed if I would follow him to London, my pretty," said the old dame, "since nobody can tell what he purposes doing with you. I don't trust him for one any farther than I can see him."

"I shall obey my husband," said poor Kate, resolutely. "You can stay behind if you like, but I have money enough to take us both to London and as for my grandfather I shall get him Mrs. Pringet, the regular nurse from St. Edmund's."

"And what excuse will you make to get off?" asked the old woman.

"None," replied Kate, sadly, "I have refused to deceive my old grandfather. If the St. Edmund's people choose to talk about me, they must talk, and if you will not come with me, I must go alone."

"Nay, I'll come with thee, my pretty," cried the old dame. "I would not let you go alone into the power of that bad man, in wicked wide London. I'll go with you and take care of you, trust old Mother Michael."

Kate succeeded in hiring a nurse for her grandfather; Uncle Josh did not call at the house either that day or the next, and old Mr. Grey was in too imbecile a state of mind to remark upon her leaving the house. A farmer in the neighbourhood gave Miss Grey, for so she was called, a seat by his side in his trap, and the old woman sat behind. Kate simply said that she had been ill, that she was going away for a change, and that Nurse Michael was to accompany her. No questions were asked farther, and the two women started from the Upfield station at half-past one, without exciting the least remark.

Afterwards, when the terrible tragedy which followed filled all the newspaper columns, excited men's minds, and roused their honest indignation, it was remembered how that the pale, pretty young girl leaned, as if for support, upon the arm of the withered old woman, as they walked up and down the platform. The train arrived at Euston at the time named; weak and giddy from recent illness, the young country girl, who was Oscar's lawful wife, stood upon the crowded platform, clinging to the arm of old Mrs. Michael, and looking about for her husband. No trace of him was visible.

The poor creature found herself almost moneyless in the great city. She had brought only a small packet of clothes with her. She did not know the address of the aunt, who had lately moved.

"Oh, Oscar Oscar!" she exclaimed, aloud, "how cruel, how cruel!"

Just at that moment her eyes rested upon a figure which the instinct of love pointed out to her as that of her husband, but he wore a strange disguise, and, seen by the glaring lights on the platform, his appearance was sinister, unnatural—strange.

Kate's heart sank within her, and for the first time, she knew what fear was.

(To be continued.)

## SCIENCE.

A SOMEWHAT important error in our measurement of the distance of the sun from the earth has been discovered. It is now proved that we have been accustomed to over-estimate the distance by four millions of miles, and that instead of ninety-five millions, the real figure is ninety-one. This discovery is credited to Mr. Stone, Royal Observatory, Greenwich.

**LIGHTING UP THE STOMACH.**—We find the following curious statement in a Canadian paper:—M. Milliat, in France, introduces into the stomach glass tubes of small calibre, connected with a strong battery, and containing the electrodes necessary for producing a brilliant galvanic light. Tumours or ulcers in the abdomen can thus be observed through the skin, and the interior lit up as when the feeble light of a candle renders the finger translucent.

## THE GULF STREAM AND ITS EFFECTS ON OUR CLIMATE.

THE following letter is worthy of the attention of captains of vessels:

"Largo, January 28, 1869.

"Sir,—In the report of the meeting of the Scottish Meteorological Society, Dr. A. K. Johnston is stated to have said, in reference to the temperature of the Gulf Stream, 'the water of the stream has been ascertained in one place to be 80 deg. higher than that of the surrounding ocean within the length of a man-of-war lying athwart the current, one thermometer being plunged at the stem and the other at the stern of the vessel.' Is this really so? In the course of voyaging, I have myself entered the stream at various points, but never found the difference much more than a third of that amount—more usually somewhat less than a third. The logs of either the Inman or Cunard Company's steamers would furnish excellent data for ascertaining the temperature of the north-eastern portion of the stream at different seasons; and, in all probability, if application were made by any of the scientific bodies to these companies, such information on the subject might be obtained as would materially aid us in determining the effects of the Gulf Stream on our climate. It seems to be a generally received fact that it is to the Gulf Stream we are indebted for our comparatively mild climate, and moreover, that it is owing to the same cause the Norwegian Fjords remain open during winter, presenting a strong contrast to the ice-bound shores of the Bothnian Gulf, in the same parallel. Many a practical man, and all the leading meteorologists of Europe, seem to regard this view of the question as settled; nevertheless, I think it admits of a doubt or something more. Their theory is founded on the assumption that a current of warmer water, as well as

of warmer air, than the high latitude of these islands ought naturally to give us, is brought to our shores by the Gulf Stream. Well, let us closely examine the matter.

"First as to the water. The Gulf Stream, after passing the narrows between Cuba and Florida in a north-easterly direction, spreads out, diminishing in force, until at least its western edge, on reaching the Newfoundland Bank, ceases to have any motion whatever. Here it is met by another current coming from Baffin's Bay and the Polar Ocean. It was this Baffin's Bay current that carried, during spring, in a southerly direction, for nearly a thousand miles, a vast field of ice, in which was beset one of the vessels sent after Franklin. Now the Gulf Stream and these great currents from the north meeting on the outer edge of the Great Newfoundland Bank in a spent state, would seem to neutralise each other, since from the Newfoundland Bank to our shores—a distance of considerably over a thousand miles—there is no perceptible current whatever in the sea. And fortunate for us that such is the case, because if the Gulf Stream continued to run to our shores, all the icebergs and vast fields of ice carried every summer by the Polar current to the eastern edge of the Newfoundland Bank would, in that event, be brought to our coasts, to the complete deterioration of our climate. Even some distance westward of the Newfoundland Bank the Stream almost ceases to be regarded as an element in navigating ships, so greatly reduced is its strength, and hence it is reasonable to infer that none of the warm water of the Gulf Stream ever reaches us.

"Then as to the warm air of the stream which is said to benefit us so much. On entering the Gulf Stream from the Atlantic immediately north-eastward of Cuba, the temperature of the sea increases at once 10 or 12 deg. In some cases it may be more, owing to certain conditions of the atmosphere and particular winds. It is curious how, without using the thermometer, one is in a moment sensible of being in the Stream. It is not merely the peculiar haze on the water, or the short, cross, and disagreeable nature of the sea caused by the rapidity of the current, but the heavier and more unpleasant state of the atmosphere, which sometimes produces sickness. As, however, progress is made eastward, day after day, the peculiar features, as well as temperature, of the Stream gradually diminish with its strength, until, on reaching the eastern edge of the Newfoundland Bank, they cease to differ from the surrounding ocean. Then the navigator regards himself as fairly out of the warm river, and subject to the usual conditions of the Atlantic, including, if in winter, cold, snow, and frost-bite. The Gulf Stream is undoubtedly left behind, and, with it, its warm water, as well as warm air. Colder and colder it becomes as the ship increases her northing, the water freezing on deck, and the tackling, from ice, running with difficulty. The winds ranging from S. to N.N.W. bring various changes of temperature, but in none is there—I speak of winter—any affinity to the Stream.

"I am not a scientific man, and therefore it may be arrogance in me to assert 'that I do not hold with the belief that the Gulf Stream exercises any decided influence on our climate.' How can it, when neither its water nor its air ever reach us? I have shown there is no perceptible sea current on this side of the Newfoundland Bank—that is to say, irrespective of the current which runs southward from the Polar seas; and as for the air, though the prevailing winds between us and the Gulf Stream have a considerable degree of westerly in them, especially in winter, yet between these islands and the Great Bank there are always blowing different currents of northerly, westerly, and southerly winds, each current having an area of its own for the time being, not, however, continuing steadily the same from week to week, or season to season, but ever changing in force and direction, one overmastering or absorbing the other, so that, if ever the soft Gulf Stream wind makes a start for our shores, it is buffeted to and fro, receiving a northerly blow on one side, or an easterly check on the other, until none of its original warmth or life is left in it. It does not therefore seem to me reasonable that in this region of the 'variables' a single puff of the Gulf Stream air ever comes to us intact. Well, if not the Gulf Stream, it may be asked, what else gives us so mild a climate, exempting us from the usual conditions of high latitudes?"

"My belief is that it is owing to the great expanse of the Atlantic and its great depth on our western coasts, the temperature of the air having less effect on deep water than on shallow. Every seaman knows how, in running from the ocean into soundings, the temperature decreases, striking into his very bones; and it is certain that where the coasts of a country, like those of Holland and Denmark, shelve gradually for a considerable distance seaward, having, moreover, banks beyond, the temperature of the air asserts its supremacy with much greater effect than where



there is a deeper body of water to resist it. The Norwegian coast is much like our own, being bold with deep water, and hence its exemption from ice. There may be other causes which modify our climate, but according to my views the influence of the Gulf Stream is not one of them. I am, &c., D. M. L."

## THE VANITY OF PRIDE.

### CHAPTER I.

"Do you dare presume to answer me? This is too much! But beware! I will have you turned out of the house this very day!"

These words, uttered with haughty arrogance by Elinor, were addressed to her foster-sister, the sweet and timid Flora, the adopted child of Elinor's mother, the Duchess of Audley.

Flora was indeed a lovely creature, quite opposite, in appearance, to the imperious Elinor. She was an exquisite Hebe-like blonde; but the long and curved fringes of her deep blue eyes were as dark as night; her bright, golden hair, classically parted across her snowy forehead in sunny waves; her sylph-like form, enhanced by a hand and foot of fairy-like proportions; and the ingenuous smile which disclosed her small, pearly teeth, bore irresistible fascination.

Elinor was a decided brunette, with eyes as black as jet, but deficient in feminine softness to mitigate their bold and piercing expression; and yet she was very beautiful; her face would have been perfect, but for a certain coarseness in the lower part; her form, too, was finely moulded; but her hands and feet were a shade too large to please the most fastidious observer; with all this she was, when she chose, extremely fascinating, and had succeeded in captivating the young Marquis of Laureston, to whom she was shortly to be united.

The marquis much admired the gentle Flora, which had sufficed to make the envious Elinor conceive the most violent aversion to her, and she took every opportunity to annoy and insult the lovely girl.

One day the mild and gentle Flora had ventured to expostulate with her on the cruelty of her behaviour, when the haughty Elinor became pale with anger, and addressed to her the insulting speech with which our tale begins.

Poor Flora, her heart bursting with grief, flew to her room, and, falling on her knees, covered her face with her hands, and burst into a torrent of tears.

"Oh! mother, mother!" cried she, in a tone of despair; "why are you no more?"

"My dear child! what can be the matter with you?" said a soft voice, to the young girl.

"Oh, madam!" cried Flora, throwing herself at the duchess's feet; "my benefactress, pardon me these tears!"

"Open your heart, to me, my dear Flora; come, tell me what has happened?"

Flora remained a moment without answering, then, respectfully kissing the duchess's hand, replied:

"Do not ask me," said she, in a voice interrupted by sobs; "but allow me to depart!"

The duchess looked at her seriously.

"Why do you wish to leave me?" said she.

"I cannot tell you without causing you much pain!"

"You make me suffer more by hiding it from me."

Flora held down her head and was silent.

"It is enough," said the duchess; "I will no longer insist!" and she was leaving the room, when Flora stopped her.

"Ah! madam!" said she, "if I am silent, it is because I am not alone to blame; the sweet friendship which you wished should exist between your daughter and myself is snapped asunder!"

The frown which had gathered on the duchess's forehead was quickly dissipated.

"Proceed," said she.

"You had the goodness to say to me, 'I will have no distinction between my daughter and you; be sisters, since the same bosom nourished you both!' You allowed me to partake of her lessons."

"Yes," said the duchess, "and your improvement has exceeded my most sanguine wishes."

"For a long time," continued Flora, "Elinor has treated me with indifference; I suffered in silence, for I loved her; now she despises, hates, and humiliates me. But pardon me," added Flora, interrupting herself, and wiping away her tears, "she is your daughter, and I ought not to accuse her. However, that I may not injure her happiness, I feel I ought to seek elsewhere an asylum."

"No!" said the duchess, sighing; "I vowed to your dying mother never to abandon you! Your father is no more, and I will never leave the orphan to the care of a stranger. This is some childish quarrel; let me hear no more about it!"

Then smoothing the weeping girl's ruffled hair, and tenderly kissing her forehead, she continued:

"My child, you have but me on earth; what then

would become of you were you to leave me? You are scarcely eighteen, and your beauty might one day be the source of great misfortune to you. You might be fortunate in a pecuniary way, but not happy; at least, that was your mother's fate. How many times did she not regret the humble circumstances in which formerly she had existed, free from care. Your father was industrious, and they both lived comfortably on the profits of their labour. On bringing my daughter home, whom your mother had nursed with the tenderest care, I loaded them with presents. Her husband, until then sober and honest became idle, and kept bad company. Ah! my dear Flora," said the duchess, again kissing her, "I do not wish to make you forget the respect due to the memory of your father; but merely to show you the right I have to protect and shield you from harm; but no, I will not harass you by detailing the dreadful end of your father! It would fill with bitterness that kind heart, already torn by Elinor's aspersions!"

"Oh! tell me, I implore you!" cried Flora.

"Alas, my child! he one day disappeared, carrying with him all your poor mother possessed in the world; and shortly afterwards she learned that he had been taken, together with some coiners, and was accused of being their accomplice. Then, for the first time, he perceived the guilt into which he had fallen, and, to escape dishonour, destroyed himself."

Here Flora hid her face in the duchess's bosom.

"Look up, my child, and fear not; one may deplore one's birth, but not blush for it. Which of us is responsible for the fault of a parent? Besides, these facts are only known to myself. The dreadful news overpowered your poor mother—she was struck with death. I flew to her sick bed, and the poor dying creature, unable to articulate a single word, exerted the little strength which remained, to place you in my arms. I swore to become a second mother to you. At that promise her half-closed eyes became re-animated, and, raising them to heaven, she expired. You see, dear child, that you are wholly mine!"

Flora answered not, but falling on her knees at the feet of the duchess, encircled with her arms the form of her noble benefactress.

### CHAPTER II.

Two months had elapsed after this conversation, when one fine morning three splendid horses, held by the duchess's grooms, waited at the door. Soon the proud Elinor appeared, attended by two friends of her mother's. An elegant riding habit displayed her fine figure to the best advantage; all the servants hastened to attend her, and seemed to endeavour to anticipate her slightest wish. Poor Flora, leaning from the verandah, followed her with her eyes.

"The marquis is not yet then come?" said Elinor, in a piqued tone.

On being answered in the negative, she turned to those who accompanied her:

"I never wait," said she. "Let him join us in the park."

So saying, she mounted her horse, which impatiently pawed the ground, and was on the point of setting out, when an old beggar slowly advanced, leaning on his stick. He appeared bent by suffering.

"Charity, for the love of heaven, my good lady!" ejaculated he, fixing his eyes on Elinor, with an indescribable expression.

Annoyed at this interruption, Elinor haughtily ordered the servants to drive him from the door; but with a vigorous effort he broke from their grasp, and laying his hand on her horse's bridle, reiterated his demand. To get rid of his importunities Elinor spurred forward her horse, which galloped off, leaving the poor beggar extended on the ground.

Flora screamed at the sight, and ran down to see if he were hurt. A blow from the horse's hoof had cut open his forehead, and the blood flowed in profusion. Flora bandaged it with her handkerchief; and, when he was able to walk, she led him into the hall and gave him a reviving cordial.

"Great heaven, I thank thee!" ejaculated he, with upraised and trembling hands. "The few days that thou hast spared me shall be employed in atoning for my past errors." Then turning to Flora, "Angel of goodness!" said he, "may the blessing of heaven hover round thy head!"

His trembling lips murmured something more; then falling on his knees to thank the gentle Flora, he was on the point of retiring, when the Marquis of Laureston entered.

"What has happened?" asked he.

The old man related to him all that had passed.

"It is to this sweet girl," said he, "that I owe the preservation of a life which has long been insupportable to me; but which now, thank heaven, has been spared for a short time longer!"

The astonished marquis threw a look of admiration at Flora; who, blushing deeply, modestly cast down her eyes. He then gave a piece of gold to the poor

man, and, having addressed to the sweet girl the praises she so well deserved, he went to join the cavalcade.

Flora was now quite alone, and by way of passing away the time, she went to the piano and played several pieces; then she sang an air to perfection, which Elinor executed but indifferently. Just at this moment the party returned. Flora's melodious voice and brilliant execution attracted the marquis, who turned to Elinor to inquire who the talented person could be.

"I have not the least idea," said she, reddening with vexation; then, without waiting a moment, she flew to the drawing-room, when Flora rose quickly.

"What are you doing here?" said Elinor, harshly.

"Leave the room this instant!"

Flora, without answering, shut the book, and began to put in order the loose music on the piano.

"Since when have I to repeat my orders?" cried Elinor, furious with passion.

The marquis entered at this moment, and made way for Flora, who left the room without a word.

The wedding was fixed for Easter; there now remained but a few weeks till that time, and these the marquis employed in selecting the bridal presents, which were elegant and costly enough to flatter the vanity of the haughty Elinor. Still, the nearer the time approached, the less assiduous the marquis's attentions appeared.

Elinor's faults, which betrayed themselves in spite of the care she took to hide them, became more and more apparent to her future husband; but it was now too late to retract. "Beside," thought he, "she is young, and a spoiled child—she may reform."

The eve of the wedding-day at length arrived. Elinor was in the sweetest temper imaginable—she admired her diamonds, and tried on her wedding dresses with an air of importance which fully showed the frivolity of her heart. They retired early to rest; but Elinor slept little that night. She rose with the dawn, and, feeling heated from want of sleep, she slipped on a morning dress, and went into the garden. A balmy breeze wafted a thousand delicious odours from the flowers, and the beautiful betrothed had walked for some time, when all at once she heard a sound close behind her. She turned round, and, to her astonishment, the old beggar again stood before her. She sought to fly; but he grasped her arm.

"Unhappy girl!" said he; "be silent, or—do you see this scar?" continued he, uncovering his forehead—"you will soon tremble to think you were the cause of it."

"Unhand me!" cried Elinor, "or I will call the servants!"

"I fear not your anger," calmly observed the old man. "Call all your servants, if you will; but it is you, not I, who will stand confounded before them, for you are my child! I am your father!"

"Oh, heaven!" murmured Elinor, and her senses nearly forsook her.

"You my father?" said she, with a scornful and incredulous smile.

"Yes, I repeat it, your father! Behold also in me the poor beggar you so arrogantly drove from your door—whom you so cruelly trampled beneath your horse's feet—who has been guilty towards heaven and the noblest of mothers, in imposing on her my child instead of her own!"

Elinor turned pale, and her lips trembled.

"Well," said the old man, "you no longer smile, you are no longer proud!"

"What proof have you?" asked Elinor.

"Proof enough, or I should not have come here, depend upon it," said the old man, opening his vest, from the inner lining of which he produced an old pocket-book, and, taking from it a letter, gave it to Elinor. As her eyes ran over the writing, her suffused cheek and shortened respiration betrayed how fully she was convinced; but her heart, filled by ambition, and deaf to the voice of nature, still remained closed to conviction.

"You may imagine to deceive me," said she to the old man; "but, beware, the duchess will not be easily imposed upon!"

"I pity your delusion," answered her companion.

"Listen to a detail of the circumstances attending your birth, then if you recognise in me a parent, we will depart quietly this night; but you shall never be Marchioness of Laureston."

The mysterious whispering of the wind among the leaves made Elinor tremble. She imagined someone listened, and, following the old man into a more retired part of the garden, he related the following story:

"The duke, whose name you now bear, had been gone for some months on a long voyage. The duchess, who was expected to give him an heir, had been prevented from accompanying him. She at length gave birth to a daughter. Your mother, whom she had known for some time, was intrusted with the nurture of the child, whose weak and deli-



[THE MENDICANT'S CLAIM.]

cate health required the greatest care. The doctors shortly ordered change of air, and your mother soon went to live at our little cottage in the country, taking with her the duchess's infant, to be brought up with our own, which had been confided to the care of a stranger. Shortly after this news came that the duke, whilst on his return home, had been attacked with so serious an illness that it was impossible for him to continue his journey, and the duchess was sent for to join him without delay. After her departure, her infant became so much worse, that we feared it would die before her return. I was very uneasy about this, as the duchess's bounty to us kept us in comfortable circumstances. If, then, anything happened to the child, poverty would soon come upon us, as I had then no work or business. A remarkable resemblance in the duchess's child to our own first suggested to my mind the base act which I have ever since deplored: which was to send the sickly infant out to nurse at a distance, and bring up our own thriving child as the duchess's. The plan succeeded entirely to my satisfaction, as no one had seen the duchess's child since its arrival, except the woman who had nursed ours, and she had left the country. The only clue, then, to the identity of the children, was a heart-shaped mark, which our infant bore on her left side at her birth. This mark, faint at first, became, as she increased in age, of a deep crimson colour—"

At these words Elinor's emotion betrayed so much conviction, that the old man paused for a moment; then, resuming the conversation, he added:

"I see I need not proceed farther; suffice it to say, the artifice succeeded, and your mother died without being able to declare the truth. There was a false report that I had committed suicide; I was then abroad, where I have remained till the present time, and, in some measure, as an expiation for my crime, have begged my way here to see you and declare the

truth. Let us, then, leave here to-night as quietly as possible. Promise me that you will meet me here, prepared to depart!"

The horror-stricken Elinor in vain endeavoured to articulate an answer, when steps were heard coming towards them. The old mendicant immediately retreated amongst the bushes, with an injunction to Elinor to be at the same spot that night.

The servants had risen earlier than usual on this morning, in order to prepare for the wedding entertainment, and it was one of them who had interrupted so unexpectedly the foregoing conversation.

On turning the angle of the walk, the servant was much surprised at finding his young mistress in a fainting state. He hastened forward to support her, and was horrified at observing her white dress spotted with blood, as well as the handkerchief she held to her mouth.

She was carried into the house, speechless, and laid upon a sofa. The duchess and Flora were called up, and servants sent in various directions for medical assistance, which soon arrived.

The doctors pronounced their patient to be in a most dangerous state. She had broken a blood-vessel, and the least exertion or emotion might prove fatal to her.

The kind duchess and Flora hung over the stricken Elinor with the most intense anxiety. They had questioned her many times as to the probable cause of her sudden illness, but the only answer they could obtain was a wild and despairing look.

She remained quiet and passive during the day, and as the evening drew in, the duchess anxiously awaited the doctor's second visit: when, just at dusk, the sound of firearms was heard in the garden, and servants were seen running in various directions. The duchess immediately sent her maid to learn the cause of the disturbance. She soon returned with the news that a man had been shot in the act of getting over the

wall, by the head gamekeeper, who waited without to speak to her ladyship.

Elinor expressed by her looks so much anxiety to be present at the detail, and appeared so much lighter and better, that, to indulge her, the duchess sent for the gamekeeper to her apartment.

The man's account was that he had observed some person, early that morning, getting over the wall, shortly after the alarm which had attended his young mistress's sudden illness. With an idea that her indisposition was in some way connected with the stranger's appearance, he had been on the look-out all day for the intruder, when at dusk he again made his appearance.

"Having called to him," said the man, "several times, and receiving no answer, concluding he must be a most determined robber, I at length fired, and the ball took effect. We have just examined the body, but could discover nothing of any consequence, except this old pocket-book, which, as it may contain something of importance, I have brought to your ladyship."

At this moment Elinor's eyes flashed with unusual excitement, and, darting from the sofa on which she reclined, she hastily seized the pocket-book, and concealed it within the folds of her dress. But this exertion had been too much for her; she tottered, and, but for the duchess's assistance, would have fallen to the ground. The blood again bubbled from her lips with fearful violence, and, when the doctor came once more, he gravely shook his head; his warning had been disregarded—no power on earth could save her!

She had vainly imagined that with her father's death and the possession of the pocket-book, would end the important discovery of her obscure birth; but a higher power ordained that she should never enjoy a deceit so prejudicial to another.

Every remedy had been tried, but without success, and Elinor was getting weaker and weaker, when she expressed a wish to be left alone with the duchess and Flora.

"Grieve not for me!" said she to the distracted duchess; "I feel I have not long to live, and am thankful that the Great Giver of good has spared me these few moments in order to give you, with my last breath, that consolation which I alone have the power to bestow!" then, motioning to Flora to approach the duchess, she said, in an emphatic voice, "embrace your child!"

"What mean you?" exclaimed the astonished duchess.

"That, in the unhappy object before you, you behold one who has never had any claim to your maternal affection. This," added she, taking a letter from the old pocket-book, "will explain all when I am gone; and now, dear Flora," said she, in a fainter voice, "can you pardon me my cruel and unjust behaviour to you? I cannot die happy without your forgiveness!"

"I forgive you, from my heart," said the weeping Flora; "for my greatest grief has been that your love was ever denied me!"

"I have been a sinning creature!" gasped Elinor. "To secure the affections of the marquis, I would have bartered all—justice, friendship, affection. He would have married me from a sense of duty; while you, dear Flora, alone possessed his heart. Heaven, in its justice, has prevented the sacrifice; and I die happy in making you the only reparation in my power—the restoration of your rights. And oh! in your hours of wedded happiness, do not cease the memory of the erring creature who died blessing you!"

Here Elinor's voice became almost indistinct, as she murmured:

"I see you pity and pardon me. All is getting dim. Come nearer—let me hear your voice once more! Pray for me—one prayer!"

A short time after this, on a lovely autumn evening, two persons walked slowly along one of the thickly-shaded walks surrounding the Duchess of Audley's beautiful mansion, which had that day been the scene of unusual festivity and excitement, in consequence of the duchess introducing to the world, her newly-found daughter, and the young heiress's nuptials with the Marquis of Laureston. The happy pair had sought a few moments of retirement from the festive scene; and the young marquis's arm tenderly encircled the slight form of his lovely bride, as they wandered along in an elysium of joy.

"Let us not forget, amidst so much happiness, that we have a duty to perform ere we leave here," said the gentle Flora, as, taking her husband's hand, she led him to a sort of grave formed of willows, in the centre of which was a plain white marble tablet; and then the youthful pair knelt upon the greensward, and breathed a prayer of peace to the memory of the dead.

The tablet contained but one word—"Elinor."

S. L.





[THE WILD HIGHLANDER.]

## THE PHANTOM OF MARION.

## CHAPTER IX.

A WEEK had passed away since the arrival of the party at Lord McGregor's castle. He, a fit representative of the open-hearted and generous race to which he belonged, had in every conceivable way endeavoured to make the time pass pleasantly to his friends. Hunting parties, pic-nics, and excursions upon the beautiful lakes near his castle had been of frequent occurrence; and, although Lady Alice joined in the latter merely to divert any suspicion that might arise in her parents' mind, yet to her they were vain, hollow, unmeaning mockeries.

On the morning of which we write, Lady Alice sat in the drawing-room of the castle, gazing vacantly out upon the greensward, and meditating upon the subject most dear to her heart, and most painful to her mind—Colonel Le Fontaine.

With a light step, Lady Mary Lyndon approached, and laid her hand gently upon her friend's shoulder. The touch, soft as it was, quite startled Lady Alice; and, as she saw the inquiring look upon her friend's face, she said, apologetically:

"You almost frightened me, May; I was thinking very deeply."

"And I will venture to say that I know the subject of your reflections."

"Well?" queried Alice, unconcernedly.

"You are thinking of Colonel Le Fontaine."

"Yes, I was pondering upon his sad disappearance, and wondering whether he were dead or alive," replied Alice, composedly, knowing that an admission would more effectually disarm her friend's mistrust than a denial; for, in such cases, the female mind is generally controlled by opposites.

"It is sad indeed," returned Lady Mary, musingly. "I took a great fancy to him, he was so handsome!"

"I never thought him handsome," rejoined Alice.

"Tastes differ, you know, Alice; but the subject is not one calculated to cheer; for death, even if the object be merely an acquaintance, has power to grieve; but let me not dwell upon it. Do you accompany us in our ride?"

"I suppose so," she wearily answered; and, arising, ascended to her room, donned her habit, and then returned to the drawing-room, where the party were assembled.

Presently, the horses were announced to be in readiness, and the ladies proceeded to the area, where, by the aid of the gentlemen, they were safely mounted.

As Lady Alice sat in her saddle and gazed at the

smiling faces around her, heard the merry peals of laughter that rippled on the air, a sensation of utter loneliness came over her; for he whom she loved, and the only one who had received the full affection of her heart was absent; and oh—dread thought—perhaps for ever.

The cavalcade moved forward: and, as Lady Alice rode along, strange feelings possessed her; her mind seemed completely beyond control; her late grief turned to anger, tempered with hilarity; she felt an irrepressible desire to ride like the wind, and, although her horse was then upon a gallop, it appeared to her that she was moving at a snail's pace.

"Why don't you ride—why do we move so slowly?" she exclaimed, swinging her whip around her head, while her eyes sparkled unnaturally, and a bright flush appeared upon each cheek.

"Why, my child, we are now riding very fast," answered Lord Beauford, gazing upon her with a mingled of alarm and anxiety.

Lady Alice's nerves, which were naturally very highly and delicately strung, had sustained a severe shock when the colonel's loss was announced, and had subsequently suffered a great strain, consequent upon the thoughts of him; while the unnatural suppression of her feelings and the assumption of a false manner had quite disarranged her nervous system, and, had had a debilitating effect upon both mind and body. Even now she was labouring under a mental aberration that seemed to review everything, and clothe nature in a disguise.

For a short time she rode on without speaking; yet within, a voice seemed to say, "Fly, fly—why do you linger?" She sought to control herself, and repress these weird sensations, knowing that the eyes of the party were upon her; but her efforts were fruitless. In an instant more she imagined herself tired; her brain seemed to throb, and throb, like a mighty engine, and the reverberations of its workings sounded upon her ear. Her feelings of opposition were fast melting away, her mind was no longer in her power; the earth seemed to whirl around, the galloping horses at her side appeared like statues, and still that voice rung upon her ear in intense, thrilling accents, "Go, go!" She no longer had strength to resist; an avalanche seemed to be ready to slide upon her should she hesitate an instant longer; and, lifting her whip, she struck her horse a sharp, stinging blow across the ears, while her face seemed burning, and her eyes shone like stars.

The animal, very spirited, and unused to such treatment, broke into a wild run, and soon was far ahead of the party, while its rider was swinging her whip, and shouting gleefully.

"My child has lost her mind! Save her—save her!" exclaimed Lord Beauford.

"I have the fleetest horse, and will rescue her!" answered Edward McGregor, as he drove the spurs into his horse's flanks and bounded forward at a gallop.

Far in advance of young Edward was Lady Alice, her steed unrestrained and dashing furiously onward. In the course of her wild ride her hair had become unloosed, and now hung swaying in the breeze, while ever and anon, the head was turned towards her follower, and the blue eyes sent forth bright flashes, and through the air came the words:

"Ha ha, I ride upon the wind—you shall never capture me!"

Her friends' pleasure was changed to sorrow; all admired and loved her, and they now feared she was riding to her death. Lord Beauford was greatly agitated, and suffering intense pain; and, with aching eyes and heart wildly beating, he continued to gaze at the intervening distance between pursuer and pursued.

"He is not gaining an inch; her horse seems possessed of a demon, and he is mad, actually mad!" groaned Lord Beauford.

"She has taken the road to the right—the road to the cliff! 'Tis life or death—follow me, gentlemen!" shouted Lord McGregor, as he struck the spurs into his steed and sprang forward.

Lord Beauford's heart seemed to rise in his throat as these terrible words struck upon his ear; and, urging his horse forward, he followed his friend, while he prayed heaven to save the child whom he never had really loved until that moment.

Stimulating their animals, they rushed on, and struck into a path at the right, with the hope of intercepting Lady Alice before she should arrive at the cliff.

When within a short distance of the path on which they hoped to meet, and stop her in her wild flight, her angry steed dashed by like a flash, heading directly for the chasm, with blood-red nostrils and blazing eyes, while its rider sat gracefully in the saddle, her eyes beaming, and her long hair standing straight in the wind.

"She is lost! Great heaven she is lost!" exclaimed the father, in heart-agony, while the perspiration poured from his aching brow, and his form trembled from excess of emotion.

They reached the road—they neared the furious steed and its dauntless rider—they saw the ravine of death—an instant more and she was upon its very brink.

Lord Beauford reeled, and clutched the pommel of

his saddle to save himself from falling; he could not look up, he dare not.

Already, in his imagination, he saw her lovely form, crushed and bleeding, at the bottom of the chasm. At that moment a cheer sounded upon his ear, and awoke a faint hope in his heart.

He raised his eyes. The wild horse had paused, as if by instinct, upon the very edge of the precipice, and stood panting for breath. She was saved, but was still in jeopardy.

Young Edward slowly and cautiously advanced to the head of her steed and essayed to grasp the bridle; when suddenly Lady Alice turned her horse, at the imminent peril of her life, and, cutting him with the whip, went by like a meteor.

"We must stop her!" ejaculated Lord Beauford. "Do you take the right, and I the left."

She saw them; she knew her father; she understood his purpose; she knew the peril she had been in; she knew all, yet was impelled by a mystic power she could not resist; and, lashing her horse, she sprang forward and passed them ere they could raise a finger.

"Oh, heaven, what means this?" gasped Lord Beauford, as he again started onward.

Once more that exciting race—that pursuit of fear and torture commenced, while the pursuer and pursued thundered o'er the ground.

Like an avenging angel went Lady Alice, her face as white as the driven snow, her eyes scintillating with brilliancy, her hair falling down her shoulders like a cataract of golden water, and her form proudly erect.

Pressing their horses to greater exertion, they dashed on, with faces blanched and hearts wildly beating with solicitude for the beautiful being, who, like a phantom rider, eluded them at every point, and was still riding on in advance.

Far lovelier than ever was Lady Alice, as, like Joan of Arc, she sat gracefully upon her barbed Pegasus, who, with bursting nostrils and fiery eyes, rushed onward, while the foam fell in flakes from his body, and he neighed angrily. On—on—as if upon the wings of lightning, on—on—by the terror-stricken ladies, on—on—until the forest was reached, and, like a ray of light, the mad horse and its fair rider shot from view in the intricacies of the dense wood.

"Her horse must soon give way—forward!" shouted Edward. "We can save her yet!"

And darting onward, the three gentlemen entered the forest. They rode to and from all points of the compass; they even looked in the branches of the trees, so excited had they become, and scoured the very earth, but no traces of Lady Alice could be found; and with minds tortured with undefinable emotions, and hearts oppressed, they sadly returned, after an hour's search, and informed the anxious ladies of their unavailing endeavours.

The first tears that Lady Beauford had shed, now came into her eyes, as this phantom-like and terrible disappearance became known to her. A peculiar paleness—a paleness that seemed past remove—dwelt upon her features for an instant, and then, what tenderness she possessed made itself apparent, and she wept bitterly.

"What can be done? Oh, won't you find her?" sobbed Lady Mary.

"We must return instantly to the castle," rejoined Lord McGregor; "procure huntsmen and hounds and traverse the forest!"

Acting upon his suggestion, the now saddened party turned their horses' heads towards the castle.

After entering the forest, Lady Alice continued in her wild career, until her horse began to show symptoms of fatigue and moderated his pace. Gradually her temporary insanity—or undue excitement of her nervous system—or evanescent mental aberration (call it what you please) began to fade away, and she again felt her natural functions return and resume their wonted action with natural vigour.

Her ride and its incidents seemed like a dream—a shadowy vista of the past; yet she remembered the cliff, and her friends agonised looks, and knew that their solicitude on her behalf must be poignant; yet she desired to be alone with her thoughts. Her terrible excitement had left her weak, and she wished to recover her strength before again seeing them. Now that it was all over, now that she was alone, her grief, which she had repressed until it seemed as if 'twould rend her heart asunder, now burst forth in a flood of tears. For a few moments she wept unrestrainedly, and then felt much relieved.

It is a fact, and we know it to be so, that a great weight of repressed grief upon the mind of a tender woman, whose nerves are very highly and delicately strung, and where the heart is directly and earnestly concerned, will produce a fleeting aberration or derangement, varying, of course, as to circumstances, but similar in the main, to that which we have feebly attempted to portray.

In a few moments Lady Alice became composed, and slowly advanced, deeply thinking.

Shortly she entered an open space, resembling a grove, and surrounded by woods upon all sides. Suddenly her horse, who had been walking very slowly along, stopped short, and Lady Alice raised her eyes to note the cause. As it became apparent to her vision, she uttered a slight shriek, and threw out her left hand deprecatingly.

The cause of her fear was the presence of a man of fierce visage and uncouth appearance. His coarse, bristly hair stood out nearly straight from a round, bullet-shaped head, while his face was scamed and contorted by an idiotic, repulsive expression, and nearly concealed by a scraggly beard. He was dressed in a Scotch tunic, reaching nearly to the knees, below which his limbs were encased in plaid socks. He stood before her with his mouth wide open, and his hands partially raised in an attitude of surprise.

Although Lady Alice had been upon the brink of death and trembled not, yet the unexpected and weird, startling appearance of this wild individual, had excited great apprehension in her breast. For a moment she gazed upon him, and thought, "He makes no aggressive movements; I will speak to him." Steadying her voice, and looking as calm as possible, she said:

"What do you want, my good man?"

At the sound of her voice a pleased, though in itself a repugnant expression, passed over his wrinkled features; shaking his head and rubbing his hands, he mumbled in a thick, hoarse voice:

"Umm—umm—gum—gum!"

She thought a moment, and then said, meditatively, "He means, you come. But what can he want with me. I will not—I dare not go!"

"Ay um, a gum," shouted the idiot; and then advancing, he caught her hand and pressed it to his lips, muttering, "much gum—oo—oo—"

"He seems harmless," she thought, and then a strange impulse to follow him possessed her; and, giving way to its influence, she said:

"Lead on; I will go."

The idiot seemed to understand her, and, after expressing his satisfaction in various ways, he started on, and Lady Alice followed—but where to?

#### CHAPTER X.

"I MAY be doing wrong—I may be rash," mused Lady Alice, as she guided her horse in the path taken by her strange conductor; "but he appears honest, and certainly shows no disposition to be otherwise." And, calming her fears with this reflection, she kept steadily on.

By degrees the passage became narrower and the foliage more dense, so that she was obliged continually to lower her head, to avoid contact with the projecting branches.

Seeing this, the idiot made signs for her to dismount, at the same time stooping down and offering his shoulder as a resting-place for her foot.

It was rather an original and novel mode of alighting; but it was easily and successfully accomplished, and the idiot, leading the horse by the bridle, took the advance, while Lady Alice wonderingly followed.

At every step the forest and foliage became more dense, until it was excessively annoying, and slightly hazardous to proceed. Lady Alice intimated as much, and her companion replied:

"Nit fudder, no mosh."

Lady Alice, after some meditation, translated his words as follows:

"A little farther—not much." And, taking fresh courage and feeling new curiosity, resumed her walk.

Suddenly the path seemed to end, and an apparently impenetrable wood appeared before them. Lady Alice glanced around with dismay. Had she travelled thus far only to get deeper into the forest? Had she been deceived? And, for the purpose of either confirming or refuting her doubts, she said:

"What do you mean by bringing me here? There is no outlet."

He seemed to comprehend the signification of her words; and, after indulging in several somersaults and emitting a few guttural chuckles, he advanced to the tree which formed the terminus of the path, stooped down, and began digging up the earth near one, turning each moment with an assuring nod towards his companion.

"The man must be deceiving me. Does he mean to make a path by removing trees? How foolish!"

And, provoked as well as curious, she continued to gaze upon him.

For a few moments the idiot continued with commendable perseverance to remove the earth. Having thrown up what he deemed a sufficient quantity, he turned to Lady Alice, laughed, and then firmly grasping the tree, moved it from the ground with ease, to the wonder and astonishment of the maiden, who exclaimed:

"What manner of man is this?"

Having accomplished his first undertaking, he arose, stooped down in another place, and went through with a similar performance; then, returning to the first tree, he clutched it, stepped back a few paces as if to gain an impetus, and then pushed forward with all his strength. The tree was thrown a few feet beyond, leaving an open space, through which Lady Alice discerned what appeared to be an elevation of ground.

Deeply interested in and amazed at the transformation which had taken place, and which, indeed, seemed incomprehensible, Lady Alice again turned towards her peculiar companion, and narrowly watched his movements.

Looking up with what he intended as a satisfactory smile, though in reality it was a repulsive, and, at the same time, ludicrous contortion of his features, the idiot granted, and then grasped the second tree, tore it from the earth, and threw it in an opposite direction.

By the opening thus made Lady Alice was now enabled to see the object which had at first excited her attention. Upon examination it proved to be a mound of earth, of a conical shape, and somewhat resembling a tent, though more circular at the base, and broader at the apex.

"Gum, gum!" mumbled the idiot, as he grasped the horse by the bridle and started forward.

With her curiosity excited, and wondering what new mysteries were about to be developed, the maiden entered the enclosure by the singular ingress which her conductor had effected. As she passed, she gazed upon the trees, and saw that the ends had been sharpened, and knew that it was an artificial gate, made to mimic nature, which accounted for the ease with which the saplings were lifted from the earth.

Once inside, it was apparent that a clearing had been made in the thickest portion of the forest; and she rightly conjectured that the mound was a human habitation, accessible only by the gate through which she had entered, and surrounded on all sides by dense, impenetrable woods, which gave to it utter seclusion and precluded the possibility of its being reached by any person who was not acquainted with the *modus operandi* of the ingeniously constructed entrance.

Having tethered the horse, and securely replaced the trees in their seemingly natural position, the idiot beckoned Lady Alice to follow him; and, passing round to the opposite side of the hut, he grasped a ring, and, with very little exertion, opened a large door and motioned for her to enter.

Lady Alice hesitated, but only for a moment. Unaccountably she felt a calm assurance of safety, and accordingly passed in. The room was dark, and the sudden transition from the brilliant light of the sun to the murky gloom that surrounded her, pained her eyes, and, for the moment, impressed her with a vague fear.

The idiot advanced into the apartment, and, striking a flint against a steel, lighted a lamp. As the dim rays dispelled the shadows and cast a hazy light over the strange abode, Lady Alice recovered her self-possession and raised her eyes.

In the farther end of the room appeared a small bed, upon which someone reclined.

Impelled by another of those inexplicable impulses which had so often controlled her during the day, she advanced to the centre of the room and gazed upon the occupant of the couch.

She started convulsively, pressed her hands to her brows, while a wild hope fluttered in her breast. Again she looked. A flood of joy like a mighty wave swept over her, leaving her pale and trembling with happiness. Then, as she drew nearer and beheld the pallor of the sleepless face, a horrible fear arose in her mind, a rush of grief drowned the momentary beatitude, a look of intense pain writhed her features, her heart throbbed with anguish, and, forgetting everything but her love and her despair, she threw herself upon the floor beside the cot, and pressed kiss after kiss upon the pale lips, meantime sobbing:

"Oh, thou art dead—the only one I ever loved is taken, because I love! Oh, Adolph, speak to me! Speak—oh, speak to your Alice!"

The sleeper moved, and murmured:

"Thank heaven! My love—my Alice! Oh, what joy is this!"

With reddened cheek and flashing eye Lady Alice leaped to her feet. Maidenly modesty, self-outraged pride, resentment, joy, grief, and bitter mortification made chaos of her mind; and in the midst of these conflicting and turbulent emotions, the poor girl stood captive; glad, yet grieved; happy, yet angry; proud, yet humble; loving, yet provoked at confessing it. At length she exclaimed, in choked accents:

"Oh, what have I done? I am unmadly—I have sacrificed every womanly feeling—I have betrayed my secret! Oh, if I could hide myself, get



away from mortal sight and my own shame. I—I wish I were dead!"

"Alice, Alice, do not repine!" ejaculated the colonel, in a weak voice. "You have made earth a paradise for me!"

Anger usurped all other feelings; and, turning upon him with burning eyes, she hastily retorted:

"Silence, sir! I—I hate the very sight of you!" and then the tears burst in a flood from her eyes, and she wept bitterly.

Colonel Le Fontaine considered the peculiar and aggravating position in which she was placed, and wisely remained silent, knowing that any observations which he might make would only irritate her, and thinking it better that her own good sense should rescue her from her dilemma.

For some moments the tears flowed freely; then, repressing them, she seated herself and gazed upon the floor with a pensive, vexed expression.

"How did you pass the night of the storm, Lady Alice?" asked the colonel, reservedly.

"Don't speak to me, sir! I cannot bear your voice!" she vehemently exclaimed, rising and pacing the floor, while the tears again burst forth.

The soldier gazed meditatively at the wall and said nothing.

For a short time her agitation controlled her, and then again subduing her feelings, she cast herself into a chair and remained painfully silent.

The colonel vouchsafed no remarks, and a half-hour might have passed; when, without raising her eyes, Lady Alice observed:

"Oh, colonel, can you forgive me? I know you must despise me. I hate myself; but I thought you were dead—"

And again she wept.

"Forgive you for giving me new life? Oh, Alice, do not let me arrive at heaven's gate, and then close its portals against me! Alice, do not crush me with despair—take not the hope from my heart that you yourself have given birth to! Speak, Alice. Do you love me?"

No answer.

"Alice, you must answer me. Tell me; will you make me happy? Will you, can you love me?" "Oh, colonel," she hesitatingly answered, "I am very, very glad that you are safe; but I feared you were dead."

"Dear Alice, do not let false feelings of mortification interrupt our love. If I had been dead, even your kisses could not have awakened me."

Those words, so innocently spoken, seemed to the perturbed girl to savour of recrimination; and, darting a quick glance upon him, she bitterly returned:

"You taunt me with my foolish, mad, shameful utterances. You are cruel to take advantage of my weakness!"

With a weary sigh Colonel Le Fontaine turned his face to the wall, and reflected upon the perverseness, inconsistency and contradiction perceptible in the female character.

A few moments had passed when he heard a slight rustling, and, raising himself upon his elbow, saw Lady Alice moving towards the door. In an instant his vexation departed, and he exclaimed, pleadingly:

"Alice, do not go; we may never meet again. Come back, come back!"

She turned her eyes sadly upon him, wavered an instant, and then remained still, meditating whether to proceed or return.

He noticed her indecision, a faint hope sprang up in his breast, and he said:

"Let us not part thus. Come back, and let me speak only one word."

Again she started, and again paused. Pride and love were struggling for the mastery. At last love conquered, and, with downcast eyes, she slowly approached the bed.

"Lady Alice, I have no right to speak to you of love—"

"Oh, colonel," she sobbed, her tenderness overcoming her anger, "please not to speak of that again. I am so unhappy—so hurt and mortified."

"I will not. I will tear my heart from my body; for I am worse than foolish, I am mad. It was but a dream—a sweet dream, yet so evanescent, so mocking, so delusive."

His wild manner frightened her; and, fearing that, in his weak state, the excitement might have a deleterious effect, she moved nearer and laid her hand soothingly upon his brow.

The magical touch of that soft hand instantly quieted him, and he remained motionless, now and then raising his eyes to her face with fond glances of ardent affection.

"Colonel," she said, after a few moments of silence, "will you tell me of your adventure since I last saw you?"

"If it will interest you. I had arrived at about the centre of the forest, when a man sprang into my path, and clutched my horse by the bridle. I drew

my pistol and was about to fire, when I received a blow on my head which unhorsed, but did not deprive me of my senses. I sprang from my horse, closed with my nearest antagonist, and was obtaining the mastery, when I felt a sharp pain in my arm, my senses became confused, I reeled, and must have fallen to the earth, for I knew nothing more until I found myself in my present position. The fortune-teller, who understands the sounds and motions of the idiot, informs me that he arrived very opportunely upon the scene and vanquished my enemies by the vigorous use of a club, and subsequently placed me in the saddle during my unconscious ride to my present quarters."

"And this but is the abode of the fortune-teller?" "It is; and had it not been for her kindness, my wounds would probably have proved fatal."

"How were you injured, Adolph—I beg your pardon, colonel?"

A thrill of joy entered his heart at this unmistakable sign of feeling; and then, sighing as if he recalled him, he replied:

"I was stabbed twice in my left side, and received a bullet through my arm."

"Oh, how dreadful! You do not know how very anxious we have been with regard to you. Papa has spoken of you very often."

"I am very grateful; but one thought from you, Lady Alice, is worth more than the combined solicitude all others might evince."

"You are ill, please to remember," she rejoined, assuming a gaiety she did not feel; "and we never mind the words of those who are so."

"Yes, I suppose I am raving—madly raving!" he bitterly replied.

It was apparent to her that the subject could not be expelled from his mind, and it was plainly perceptible that it was exercising a painful as well as injurious influence upon him.

Was it right to torture his noble heart, and inflict sorrow upon her own, by withholding her love, merely from sensitiveness of having inadvertently disclosed it? Her Creator knew, she knew, that their hearts beat in unison. Was it right to attempt to deceive themselves and cause mutual grief by a false notion of modesty, and an overstrained dogmatical propriety? Her heart, her love, her being said with emphasis—No! Etiquette, fashionable deception, shallow conventionalism, and proud, hollow reserve said—Yes. Which was right? She meditated a few moments, and then determined upon neither; but decided to let events take their own course, and be governed by circumstances.

For a few moments neither spoke. At length the soldier broke the silence by saying:

"You will please to omit making any mention of your visit at the castle?"

"Why so, colonel? It will relieve them of a great deal of anxiety."

"You will oblige me by humouring this whim," he answered.

"Certainly, if you desire it; but how long will it be necessary for you to remain here?"

"About a week longer, I presume, and then I shall probably return to France."

"To France?" echoed Lady Alice, in tones of deep feeling; and then hung her head down as if ashamed of her vehemence.

"Lady Alice," began the colonel, earnestly, "I promised to remain silent upon one particular subject; but I feel that I must speak—"

Her heart beat wildly as he again resorted to that subject which had caused her so much joy and pain; and, with reddened cheek and drooping eye, she tremulously waited for him to proceed.

In a tender voice Colonel Le Fontaine continued:

"Lady Alice, I am a waif upon the broad and tumultuous ocean of life. The dear knowledge of my parents I was denied; I never felt the considerate love of a mother, or the gentle affection of a sister. I have, from my boyhood, been among cold, calculating, matter-of-fact men, and sometimes among brutal ones, and received at the hand of the latter unkind and cruel treatment."

"Until I saw you, I never felt a throb of love for any person on earth. After I had known you a short time, your mild, womanly influence had its effect, and I became, as 'twere, a new man. Before, I had aspirations only for bloodshed and carnage, and thought but little of the better and more divine things of life. In seeing you worship the little flowers, and through them send your prayers of thankfulness up to your Creator, I felt a new and hitherto unknown and dormant power moving within me. I began to appreciate the earth and its beauties, and thank heaven for them—something I never did before. I have never been a bad or irreverent man; but have at times inclined towards fatalism, my belief being engendered probably by the peculiar and sad circumstances attending my early life, and the many vicissitudes which I have passed through."

"Lady Alice, I can tell you that the first love of a heart, made to appreciate its blessings through your goodness, is entirely yours." He paused an instant and then continued, in hard, painful tones: "But the poor, unknown soldier cannot ask the daughter of the Earl of Marion to be his bride."

Again her feelings of adoration burst forth. Rank, station, wealth, thoughts of parents, friends, everything, bowed to the power of love. Her heart was centred in the noble man at her side, and she cared not for his position; for she loved him.

Placing her hand gently upon his brow, while the tears gathered in her azure orbs, she murmured:

"Adolph, I am an earl's daughter, but earls' daughters have hearts. I will not sacrifice my love for earth's vain show; for 'heaven is love,' and the shallow conventionalism is but of dust. Adolph, I love you; you have my heart. Heaven will intercede that you shall have my hand."

A radiant smile broke o'er the features of the gallant officer, and, drawing her down upon his breast, he pressed one long lingering kiss upon her sweet lips. That instant was overflowing with bliss, the brightest spot of his existence. He now felt that he had an object in life; before it was merely an anticipated routine of events, and ceaseless, quiet desolation.

In a moment, Lady Alice raised her face, with the tear-stains fresh upon it, while its serene and sweetly pensive expression lent a new charm to her lovely countenance.

For a short time neither spoke, but gazed upon each other with that mute, thrilling love that ascends from the soul, speaks from the eyes, and courts silence as its first and indispensable auxiliary.

Presently the lovers were interrupted by the entrance of Margery Hinkley, the fortune-teller.

(To be continued.)

## DIGBY.

DIGBY MAINWARING was what people call a real good fellow—clever, handsome, good-hearted. He smoked and he betted a little—as anyone might, whose jolly, rich old uncle signed the bills; and he gave delicious quiet suppers that nobody else could equal, even with such a friend as Digby's Uncle Phil. An ambitious mother had deliberately taught him, and an easy-tempered uncle had never contradicted the assumption, that he was to be his Uncle Mainwaring's heir.

It was natural, then, that he should feel it as something of a blow, when most unexpectedly, that uncle, in old age, took to him a young and pretty wife. Careless, good-natured Digby might not have minded it much himself, if his mother had not filled his ears with such eloquent picturing of his wrong and his loss.

Mrs. John Mainwaring, Digby's mother, was a regular Tartar. She made Mrs. Phil's house pretty hot for her sometimes; but, though Mrs. Phil might have banished her from her husband's house with a word, she was a gentle, loving soul, and could better bear to be stung than to harm a fly.

That was the way matters stood when the baby was born—the baby which cut off Digby's hopes of heirship by just so much as the thread of its little life was strong and vital.

Mrs. Phil and Digby were good friends; and Digby liked the baby in spite of his mother, and the baby liked Digby.

The baby was a darling—a lovely child, with soft, golden, curly hair, and eyes like wild violets. Uncle Phil was completely infatuated with that baby; and poor Digby, whom the little creature had ousted, would sit dandling it on his knee by the hour. Even Mrs. John condescended to notice it, and was by no means so insensible to its cunning, endearing ways as one might have expected she would be under the circumstances.

And so matters went on till Baby Nanny was between four and five years of age. Digby, under tolerably strong pressure, had been induced to frame himself, like some huge jewel, in a setting of law-books; and had crammed to sufficient purpose to entitle him to commence for himself, and rather liked it; and Uncle Phil made a great show of employing him at a round salary, to do business that he could have done much better himself, and was his sole client.

Mrs. Phil and Mrs. John got on tolerably. Nobody but Mrs. Phil would ever have borne and forborne to the extent she did—and she was only human after all! One day the storm burst, in this wise:

Baby Nanny—there had never been but the one—was suddenly without a nurse; and Mrs. Phil, not having succeeded in supplying the vacancy satisfactorily, was going into the country, to inquire about a woman who promised well, but of whom she was still a little doubtful. Baby Nanny was to have gone with her; but, at the last moment, the child, in a fit

of wildness, cried to stay with Uncle Digby; and, amid laughter, kisses, and multitudinous charges to him to watch her pet, mamma drove off.

She accomplished her errand agreeably, and returned about sundown. Just out of the town she met a beggar-woman tramping along, covered with rags, and surrounded with some half-dozen children of all sizes, also ragged—a dirty, forlorn-looking crew; and Mrs. Phil. had a very soft heart—so she stopped, and called the woman to her to give her some money.

The woman hesitated, and finally sent one of the children to the carriage, standing aloof herself, hushing to her bosom the form of a child, wrapped and enveloped in various soiled, ragged coverings.

Mrs. Phil.'s curiosity was excited, and she called again to the woman to come nearer; but she shook her head, "I'm afraid the baby has the small pox," she stammered, only shrinking farther away, and in a sudden panic, thinking of the danger to little Nanny, Mrs. Phil. ordered the coachman to drive on. Ah, me, if she could have only pierced that apparent mass of rage and uncleanness, if she could but have known what tender little mouth was crying, "mamma, mamma," through the cruel bandages that bound it. But how could she dream of such a thing.

Arrived at home she stole in the back way to the sitting-room. Digby was still lounging there in an easy chair, but fast asleep. Baby Nanny was not in sight.

"Digby, you had fellow, where's Nanny?" exclaimed Mrs. Phil., shaking him.

Digby roused himself lazily.

"Why isn't she here? she was a minute ago; I'll look in the porch."

Mrs. Phil. followed him swiftly, and sped past him into the yard.

"You look as if you had been asleep ever since I left you," she said, a little crossly, as she beheld no signs of her darling.

"I haven't, upon my honour," declared Digby. "Nanny was by me, playing like a little mouse, not ten minutes ago. She's been as good as she could be. Nanny, little Nanny, Uncle Digby's Nanny, where are you?" he called lightly, running up stairs and along the passages, looking into the nursery and his mother's room, as he went, coming back through the kitchen, and taking a glance at the back garden, where Nanny's mamma met him with a very blank face, and almost ready to cry at her pet's non-appearance.

"Oh, where can she be, Digby, I begin to be afraid something has happened to her. What if she has slipped through the gate while you were sleeping?"

"I think not," said Digby, cheerfully, and ran up stairs, and through the house and garden again, calling, "Nanny, little Nanny;" but listening in vain for the laughing little voice that was wont to respond:

"Here I am, Untle Digby."

"One thing is sure," he said, coming back to mamma, with a slightly discomposured countenance, "She's too pretty a darling to get lost easily. Anybody would bring her home for love of her sweet face, if they found her."

"Oh, Digby, I feel as if I should die, I wish Phil. would come home, why don't he?"

"Don't fret, I'll go for him directly, and set all the policemen looking for Nanny; she can't be far off. The servants might be looking for her, too, you know."

"Yes, yes, and I must go with you, Digby, I can't stay here. Oh, baby! baby!"

But Digby persuaded her to stay where she was, just for a little time, and hurried away.

Phil. Mainwaring, with his sister-in-law, came in, before Digby had much more than got out of sight, and his wife fell, half fainting, into his arms.

Mrs. John heard the news with great composure, and declared she had no doubt the child was safe enough; there was no occasion for anyone losing their senses about it, she was sure.

Mrs. Phil. moved herself out of her husband's arms at that, and turned upon her sister-in-law, for the first time, in a passion of anger.

"You always hated my poor darling, you and Digby, and I believe you're glad she's lost. I presume you hope I shall never see her again," she cried, excitedly. "Send her away, Phil, I won't bear the sight of her any more."

"And then catching sight of Digby coming back alone, she flung a few hot words at him that drove every particle of blood from his face and made him shrink from her, speechless.

"You, too," she said, her blue eyes blazing, "I believe you've done something with my baby, and you think you'll get all my husband's money now; but you shall never, never have it. He shall make a will to-night that shall cut you off. Oh, Phil, Phil, make him give me back my baby!"

It was useless to reason with her. The gentle, quiet, loving woman was changed, for the time, into

an infuriated madwoman. She would not see or hear, or suffer to approach her, Digby or his mother, and insisted so wildly upon their leaving the house, that the two went, at Phil.'s grave request, before morning.

Meanwhile, and for days and weeks after, the search went on for the lost child, but without avail. Mrs. Phil. remained as bitter as ever in her hostility to Digby and his mother, and Uncle Phil. himself, met them coldly.

Digby had sold his horses, his law library, his curiosities, his pictures, he had turned every available thing he possessed in the world into money, and dividing that with his mother, who had besides some means of her own, he had devoted himself to the search for little Nanny, as he had never in all his life devoted himself to anything before.

He had gained more discipline of head and heart in the search than a lifetime as an amateur lawyer would have given him.

But nowhere had he found golden-haired, sweet-voiced Nanny. The more he searched through those ways of sorrow and iniquity, the more vividly he realised what the fate of the pretty child might have become, and the more sternly he resolved that he would live only to find and rescue her, till she was found.

He had nothing whatever to guide him but the merest speculation and conjecture.

That she had been stolen, he believed; either from the house or the garden, whither she might have wandered. Her beauty would have made her very valuable to any of those beggars who live upon the compassion which the sight of a starving child is wont to excite in the passer-by, or she might be hidden somewhere, being taught forgetfulness of old associations, and prepared for some life that should be remunerative to her stealer.

But that evening there came to Digby a little note from Mrs. Phil.

"I don't want to be hard upon you, Digby," she wrote, "and I know I'm too wretched to be just, but I want to tell you something because it seems to me I must, bitterly as I feel towards you. That awful day, when I was returning I met a very strange beggar woman, with a child in her arms so hidden away in rags, and of which she was so curiously careful, that I questioned her. She would not come near the carriage, and she frightened me so with a story of the little one being ill of a contagious disorder, that I drove away and left her. It could not have been my darling; she would have heard my voice, and called to me. I should have heard the very breath of her sweet voice; but somehow, though I had strangely forgotten it at first, that woman's face has come before me like a dream. I don't believe in you, Digby, for my baby's head would be here in my bosom now, if it had not been for you; but I tell you my dream."

Digby studied that note carefully. He would have given much to ask Mrs. Phil. some questions, but he shrank from making the attempt in her present state of mind.

In this emergency, he fortunately bethought himself of the coachman who had driven for Mrs. Phil. that afternoon.

He found the man possessed of good wits and fine memory. He remembered the incident perfectly, and that the child had seemed large to be in arms, and had struggled slightly, though it made no noise.

"But say, sir," said he, "it might have had something in its little mouth that wouldn't let it make a loud noise."

Digby thought so, too, with a shudder.

The coachman remembered farther that the woman had red hair.

Digby Mainwaring set out upon his renewed search with a courage he had never felt before. Fifty miles from London a telegram reached him, summoning him to his mother's bedside. She was not expected to live from one hour to another.

Digby had always been a good son. He retraced his steps at once, as rapidly as the route, which was partly by stage, would permit.

Unused to fretting as good-natured Digby was, he found his temper somewhat tried during that tedious journey. Half-way between two large towns, the stage broke down, and left him no resource but unendurable delay, or the pursuit of his way afoot. He chose the latter course, and when night came on he stopped to rest for a few hours at a farmhouse.

Sitting in the farmhouse kitchen that evening, he discovered that someone lay ill in an inner room, and later, as a light was taken into the apartment, that the sick person was a woman and that she had red hair.

It was very foolish to let his heart leap as it did, when presently the farmer's wife explained to him that the invalid was a stranger to her, a poor woman who had passed by there ill, and whom she had taken in out of compassion.

"The doctor says," she added, "that she's not

likely to live the night through, and I don't know how to tell her of it."

"I will tell her," said Digby, quickly, rising and passing at once to the woman's bedside.

She stared at him wildly as he addressed her in quiet words, telling her the truth.

"If you have anything on your mind," he added, "that needs attending to, it is full time you were doing it."

"I have not been a good woman," she said, slowly, "but none of my bad doings can be undone now, unless it be one."

Digby Mainwaring felt his heart almost stop beating as she spoke. She waited a moment and went on:

"I stole a child about six months ago, that I'd give the little life that's left me if I'd never touched. Her face is never out of my sight, her cries are always in my ears. 'Mamma, mamma,' was all she said, till we made her stop talking at all, and then she just sat and looked at us with eyes that have haunted me every minute I've laid here."

"She is not dead?" Digby exclaimed, with a suddenly quaking heart.

The woman raised her dying eyes slowly to his.

"I hope not, as I hope for mercy where I'm going. I sold her to a man who said he was going to make her a dancer, by the time she'd forgotten enough to be trusted. I wish somebody would find her and take her back to her mother."

"I will," said Digby, "only tell me how."

The woman lived long enough to give him an address in London; but she died before morning.

Long before that time, however, Digby, having partially refreshed himself with a few hours' rest, had resumed his journey in the farmer's waggon. Torn with two anxieties, he sought his mother's bedside first, and finding her out of danger, to his great relief, hurried away to a magistrate, where, having obtained the necessary assistance, he sought the address the sick woman so strangely found had given him.

It was in a good street, a respectably appearing house from the outside, and no obstacle was offered to their entrance.

A small, heavy-browed, black-eyed foreigner received them, and changed countenance very slightly upon learning their errand. But he led the way at once to an upper chamber, protesting that the woman had given, not sold him, the child as her own. As they approached the room in which the foreigner said the child was, Digby said afterwards he could distinctly hear his own heart beat. What if after all it should not be little Nanny? Children were stolen every day. His hand shook so, as, after unlocking the door his conductor stood back for him to open it, that it almost refused its office.

He swung the door wide open, motioning the others to stand back. A child stood by the window across the room, with her back to them. But as the door opened, instead of turning towards them, she crouched suddenly upon the floor like one in a fright, and Digby saw that her hair was short where Nanny's had been long, golden curls. A second glance showed him that it had been purposely cropped as closely as possible, and he breathed rather than spoke:

"Baby Nanny!"

She threw up her head with a wild cry; and Uncle Digby had her in his arms the next moment, and everybody in the room was crying, policemen and all.

Little was said. She lay like a dead child in Uncle Digby's arms but for her restless eyes, poor timid, tortured baby. Once she put a little thin hand on his cheek, and said, "Mamma," and he kissed her, and said she should go to mamma directly, and never, never leave her again as long as she lived.

It never entered honest Digby's head, that it might be too much for Mrs. Phil. to see her lost baby without warning, but it was not. Joy seldom kills. But such a scene as that was between baby Nanny and mamma; it is entirely beyond the power of this pen to describe. How Mrs. Phil. clung to Nanny, and how Nanny clung to her, as if afraid, every instant, that someone would part them again; how Nanny told, in childish talk, of her wanderings, her terrors, her hurts; how mamma cried over each pang, till Nanny, with wondrous wisdom, announced, that she shouldn't make mamma cry any more, and refused to talk of it again.

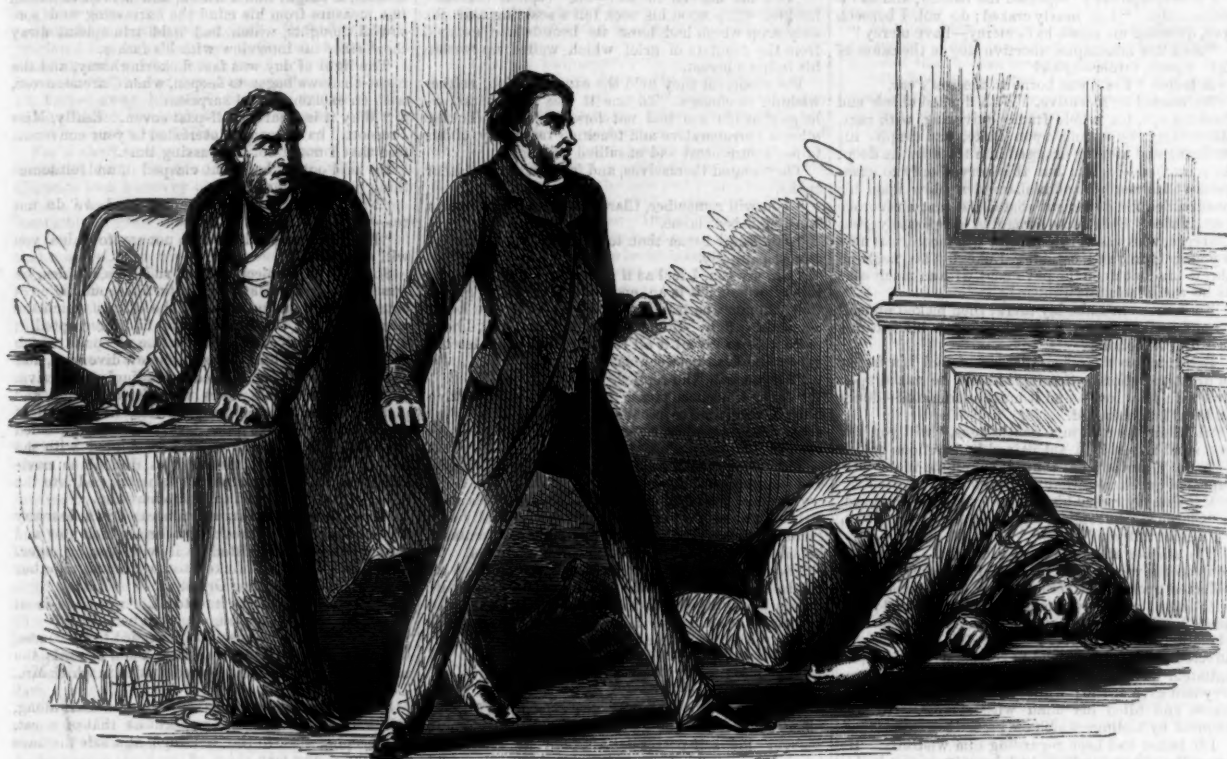
They had a grand re-union at Uncle Phil.'s, when everybody resolved to turn over a new leaf. Digby went into law in earnest, and made a fortune of his own, that even Mrs. John, his mother, could appreciate.

The foreigner, who had had little Nanny in his possession, was arrested, but nothing really illegal could be proved against him, and he was set at liberty.

It is hard telling, to-day, who of the Mainwaring family think most of Digby; but between him and little Nanny the bond is as firm as silk, and as strong as steel.

C. C.





[LUKE'S DEFEAT.]

## FAIRLEIGH; OR, THE BANKER'S SECRET.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

DURING the time that the events recorded in our last chapter were transpiring, other scenes were being enacted in the private office of Mr. Ormsby, which we must return to narrate.

Mr. Ormsby was seated at his desk, busily engaged upon some papers, and now and then passing his hand across his brow, endeavouring to alleviate the pain which caused his head to throb, and which had troubled him for the major part of the day, when his door opened and an old woman entered.

He glanced casually towards her and said: "I will see you in a moment," and then resumed his figuring.

The woman made no reply, but drew a chair and sat herself upon it.

At length the banker pushed the papers from him with a sigh of relief, and raising his eyes they fell upon his visitor. He started from his chair, and with an angry expression, exclaimed:

"Why, in the name of heaven, are you again here?"

"Don't excite yourself, my dear Edgar," sneered Luke Gibbons, for it was him.

"Oh, monster! what is it you wish now? If heaven would take you from earth it would confer an inestimable blessing upon me," he sighed, sinking into a chair, and pressing his hands to his already over-excited head.

"Aye, but it won't, eh?" retorted Luke triumphantly.

For a few moments the banker moved not; then fixing his eyes sternly upon the object before him, he said, with forced calmness:

"What are you here for? I cannot endure this. Speak and begone."

By a wonderful exercise of volition Mr. Ormsby controlled himself. He knew that he was very ill now, and was cautious of any undue excitement; but Luke's manner was insolent, overbearing and galling to the last extreme. He waited a moment and then continued:

"Answer me. What do you want?"

"Money, eh!" was the answer in a low, meaning tone, but terribly distinct.

"Money?"—he choked his anger, and said with a great effort, "how much?"

"Three thousand, eh!"

"Will this persecution last for ever?" groaned Mr. Ormsby. "Am I to be hunted to death? Is my

life to be cursed with this phantom, which ere long will drive me mad? No, I will not bear it. If disgrace is to come, let it fall in one shock and annihilate me; but this pertinacious stretching of the thread of existence, until from its elasticity it breaks, shall end here."

He was growing terribly excited; his face was flushed, his hands worked nervously together, he strode the room wildly, each footfall resounding like the stroke of a blacksmith's hammer. Stopping and confronting his visitor, he said:

"Go, thou fiend incarnate—born of Hades and sired by Pluto—go! No more shall your bands pinion my hands or control my mind—go! I am decided; do your worst—it cannot be worse than this. Again I say—go!"

As he uttered the last word, in a hoarse voice, full of rage and intense meaning, he glared at Luke, his eyes scintillating with the long pent-up fires of anger, which, like a volcano that has been smouldering for years, were more fierce and furious in their eruption.

Luke, despite his cunning, was astounded. Hitherto he had found his victim of easy management; now the spirit he had so often allayed had freed itself, and knew its strength, and before him stood the powerful man, every look and action telling him that his power was now defied, that Edgar Ormsby was his own master.

For an instant Luke seemed to have lost all control of himself; his eyes drooped, his features relaxed their set look, and he felt ill at ease. "I was only for an instant however; then he thought: 'I must not let him slip; he shall be conquered again—he shall be mine;' and he meant it.

Presently he arose and moved towards the desk, at which, a moment before, Mr. Ormsby had seated himself. Leaving himself upon the top of the desk, his face in close proximity to that of the banker, with varying expressions of ferocity, he then hissed:

"Idiot, will you ruin yourself? Shall the world know—"

"Silence!" thundered the banker. "Leave me! Let your polluted tongue be still!"

"Now be easy, Edgar, my dear boy, don't be angry. Think of your wife; how nice 'twould be to—"

"Cease; or with my own hands will I tear you to pieces!" he ejaculated, trembling with anger.

"Now be quiet," mumbled Luke, smoothing his hair with his long, bony fingers, "you are excited; it is a misfortune, I know, but, Edgar, don't be foolish. Just think of your fair-haired child, eh, Edgar; you must keep your name, eh, Edgar?"

Truly Mr. Ormsby had undergone a complete change. The power of Luke over the strong man

seemed magical. From the determined, furious man, with energy stamped upon his features and lightning flashing from his eye, in a second as 'twere, he had changed to the helpless, wavering, lethargic person, who sat with his head resting upon the desk, and anon deeply sighing. Luke continued to soothe his victim, now and then grinning horribly, and whispering words in the banker's ear, which made him tremble from head to foot. This to Luke was the keenest of enjoyment; he gloried in it, he chuckled and gazed down upon the man before him with mingled expressions of hate, scorn and triumph.

Mr. Ormsby endeavoured to rise; but Luke seemed to contain some electric power that rooted him to the chair. The banker arose to his feet; but the room seemed to whirl around, and from mental and physical exhaustion he sank into the chair.

Luke Gibbons' diabolical features underwent an awful change; his face grew black, his eyes burned and gleamed with a crimson glare, like coals of fire imbedded in jet; he trembled, he hesitated, a fiendish contortion of his features took place, and then he drew a small bottle from an inside pocket, containing a white liquid; he stared at this for a moment, and then proceeded to place it very carefully under the nostrils of the almost unconscious banker, that he might inhale it.

At that moment the door opened, and Clarence Ormsby entered the apartment. Oh, what a scene of terror was that for the son to witness! A spasm of grief shook his frame, superseded by rage, as he saw Luke's object.

Luke Gibbons knew not of his proximity, so intent was he at his work.

Clarence hesitated but the tenth of an instant, then throwing his whole strength into one leap, he cleared the intervening space at a bound, seized Luke by the throat with both hands, and before the latter had time to think, he was lying, bruised and bleeding, in one corner of the room, while the young man stood, with his arms folded, gazing from one to the other with a look which it would be difficult to analyse.

The sound of rushing feet and the thud of Luke as he struck the wall recalled Mr. Ormsby to his senses. Oh, what a look of genuine agony, unutterable, indescribable pain, sat upon the father's features as he saw his son!

"Father, who is this hound that menaced your life?"

"Oh, Clarence, don't ask me! Why did you come in at this of all times?" he moaned, pressing his hands to his throbbing brow.

"Father,"—the tone was stern—"again I ask you for an explanation. Has this man power over you?"

"Power—power?" repeated the banker, almost incoherently. "I am nearly crazed; do not, I beseech you, question me now—have mercy—have mercy!"

"And this mishap, abortive dog is the cause of it? Speak, father—is he?"

A feeble "Yes" was borne to the son's ear.

He needed no incentive. With flushed cheek and flashing eye, his whole frame quivering with rage, like a tiger, he sprang upon Luke, and despite his writhing and kicking dragged him towards the door; he scratched—he bit; but this served only to exasperate Clarence, who administered a blow upon his head which for a moment abated his sanguinivorous proclivities. Still Luke struggled desperately; but Clarence, who was very powerful when cool, was now a young giant, and catching Luke by his neck he threw him out upon the pavement with as much ease as he would an india-rubber ball.

For a moment Luke lay there; then picked himself up and walked away, with a look upon his features dreadful to behold.

Returning to the office, Clarence found his father in great agitation. Seating himself, he gazed upon him with filial love—and it must be admitted—doubt and fear intermingled.

"Father," he said in a gentle tone, "will you set my mind at rest? I am pained by emotions which I cannot describe; but they all culminate in my oft-repeated question—what does it mean?"

Mr. Ormsby raised his head, his face was haggard. "Clarence," he replied, trying to steady his voice, "I cannot tell you."

The answer affected Clarence deeply. All sorts of conjectures were raised in his mind, some of which reflected upon his father's honour; he rejected them with scorn, yet they would return. He could not doubt him; yet there were circumstances—no explanation could be given—what did it mean? It affected his father; he had never before seen him so agitated. This only served to strengthen the mystery and give it life; while it perplexed poor Clarence, and filled his mind with sorrow. He was tortured by feelings which only a son can experience.

His father had been regarding him wistfully. He knew the struggle which had been going on in his son's mind, and anxiously awaited the result of the contest. Oh, how that devoted father's heart beat, as he watched each varying expression of his son's face, and endeavoured to read the progress of the battle within.

Would it be against him? Could he acquit him, even if the preponderance of evidence was against him? Oh, how his mind was harrowed! What a question was this for the father to ask himself!—and how bitterly, heaven only knows, did it sink like caustic into his heart as he thought of it. Still, with doubt, paternal love, torturing fears, and faint hope mingled together, he gazed at Clarence, in whose mind the struggle was still progressing.

Thought battled with thought, emotion conflicted with emotion, conjectures waged war against possibilities, injustice was arrayed against justice, honour combated suspicion, evidence smote confidence, improbabilities strove with reason, concealment rallied against confession, falsehood rose up grimly against truth, love fought facts, and still the mental strife continued with unabated fury, until the poor boy's mind was one chaos of wild, conflicting, surging emotions.

Still the father's eyes, with a look of pleading, were fixed upon the son. The suspense had been dreadful, it was becoming intolerable.

Clarence passed his hand across his brow, and said very slowly, while his face, from its extreme pallor, gave evidence of the disturbance within:

"Dear father, can I not share your sorrow, whatever it may be? Surely if you can bear it, I can."

"My boy,"—the words were distinct and with a painful emphasis—"you cannot; that, alas, is all I can say."

Clarence's head fell upon his hand. Again that terrible struggle commenced and was fought over again with renewed vigour. At last love had conquered, and through his mind flashed the thought, "My father, right or wrong." A calm settled o'er the son's face. The father accepted it as a good omen; his heart lightened, and he anxiously awaited the first words that should fall from his lips and break the awful silence.

Clarence arose. Taking both his father's hands within his own, he said impressively:

"Dear father, I can, will and do trust you. I cannot find it in my heart to suspect you. You are true and noble. Father, you have your son's confidence and undiminished love—can I say more?"

A holy light shone from Mr. Ormsby's features, a smile broke over his face, and he clasped his son to his breast, while his heart went out to heaven for the boon.

"My son, you have not deserted me; you do not doubt your father?"

"No, no, heaven forbid!—no," replied Clarence, huskily, while upon his neck fell a scalding tear, the only drop which had burst its bounds and escaped from the fountain of grief which welled up within his father's breast.

For a moment they held the same position, neither wishing to change. To one it was a divine knowledge that his son had not forsaken him. To the other a corroborative and touching testimony of his father's pure heart and unsullied principles.

They seated themselves, and for a moment neither spoke.

"You will remember, Clarence, and not breathe a word of this at home."

"You know better than to ask that," he answered, almost painfully.

"Oh, my son, I feel as if I hardly know anything this afternoon; it is an epoch in my life. I grieve that you must be troubled with what little you know about this affair. Some time or other, my son, I hope to be able to reveal it all to you; until then let this subject be dead between us."

"As you will," he replied.

"Now, Clarence, please leave me. It is getting late; I need time to recover my equanimity by being alone; but remember, my son, that this day you have blessed your father."

They wrung each other's hand, both smiled faintly, and Clarence withdrew.

For some time Edgar Ormsby remained in his chair striving to calm himself. He at last partially succeeded, and locking his desk, left the office, entered his carriage, and was driven towards his home.

The motion of the carriage served to increase his headache, and when he arrived there he was very ill. It was in alighting from his carriage that he fell and cut his head, and was immediately taken into the house by the coachman and servant.

## CHAPTER XIX.

CLARENCE walked rapidly away from his father's office. He could not go home; he desired time to recover his self-possession. Could he recover it enough to conceal his perturbation from his sister? Alas, he knew not, his mind would be controlled by it for some time yet; such violent excitement does not subside rapidly. He walked briskly along, deeply meditating, and hardly aware of his locality. He gazed around him. A thought struck him. He would go and visit the poor people that his sister had taken such an interest in; if she could go there, he could. Ah, Clarence Ormsby! perhaps, after all, 'twere better that you had a little sorrow, that you might learn to pity and comfort those who were oppressed by greater ones. We all have sorrows and cares, but that agony of mind, that ranking, grasping, gripping, piercing, gnawing, hollow-aching, indescribable sensation that the rich never know, is hunger; next to that of human ills, except death, is poverty. Would to heaven that there were less in this world of ours who experienced either.

The thought pleased him, and he walked steadily on, until after a long walk, and perhaps a little weary, he knocked at the door of the room which Miss Prescott occupied.

She came to the door, instantly recognised him, and cordially invited him to enter.

"You will pardon my intrusion at such an unreasonable hour," he remarked, as he glanced at his watch. "I must have been pre-occupied with my thoughts; it is now six o'clock."

"Do not let that trouble you," she replied, with a pleasant smile. "You know we have no regulations as to hours."

"I see that you are just preparing tea; really, I must excuse myself again," he observed, somewhat confusedly.

"Say no more, Mr. Ormsby, it is no inconvenience to me, but let me ask you how dear Miss Florence is?"

He satisfied her with regard to his sister's good health, and then very timidly asked her about her own circumstances. A slight flush for an instant pervaded her features, but she knew it was said with all good feeling, and stifling the sudden qualms of pride which would arise, she answered:

"We are very well off in that respect, I thank you. Your sister's munificent kindness has aided in restoring both my mother and myself mentally, as well as physically. I shall never cease to remember her with gratitude and love."

"Pray do not mention it; it was to her a pleasure, a real pleasure."

Adroitly she changed the subject, and for some time they conversed very pleasantly together. Although surrounded by poverty, Miss Prescott had a good store of knowledge, and displayed through her remarks, a well-balanced and discriminating mind.

Clarence was much pleased with her; and in noticing the manner in which she arose above care and

trouble, it taught him a lesson, and served to banish in a measure from his mind the harassing and sorrowful thoughts, which had held triumphant sway there since his interview with his father.

The light of day was fast flickering away, and the night-shadows began to deepen, when Clarence arose, with an exclamation of surprise:

"Why it is nearly half-past seven. Really, Miss Prescott, I have been so interested in your conversation that I noted not the passing time."

He held out his hand, she clasped it, and felt something pass into her hand.

"Nay, Mr. Ormsby, you are too kind, we do not need it."

"For Florence's sake, I dare not say for mine, you will accept it."

She could not object without rudeness, besides, he was half-way down stairs, and turning round she re-entered her room and resumed the duties which the entrance of Mr. Clarence Ormsby had interrupted.

Clarence received a rejuvenation of spirits which greatly surprised him. This was a new diversion, and one that thus far had proved exceedingly attractive. After descending the stairs with some caution, and picking his way through the entries, he arrived at the street, which was quite dark. He was undecided which way to go. He was unacquainted with the place in the day time, then it was difficult to navigate, in the night 'twas perilous; he stepped into the street and endeavoured to look about him.

A few feet in his rear, and concealed in a doorway of one of the houses, crouched a form, which now and then writhed and twisted as if with pain or anger. 'Twas the latter, and Luke's teeth ground together as he watched Clarence Ormsby.

"Eh, curse you," he muttered, "my time is at hand, and we will see, eh, who will be master."

Having satisfied himself with regard to his course, Clarence started off upon a brisk walk towards the more unfrequented and isolated portion in which Mrs. Lothrop lived.

Slowly, and like a snake dragging himself along, followed Luke; his tread as light as that of a cat, and keeping close to the buildings, at a safe distance from the young man.

On they walked, the pursued strong in manly vigour, with no thought of danger, his mind bent upon doing good, and his heart comparatively light.

Stealthily followed the pursuer, his fell purpose, revenge; the place where his heart ought to be, pregnant and heavy with diabolical desires of blood and torment.

Ahead of Clarence were two rough-looking men. The locality was bad, the men looked worse; and, instinctively, he placed his hand upon his pistol, but they spoke no word nor made any demonstration.

When Luke arrived at the spot where they stood, he stopped, spoke a few words to one, which he immediately communicated to his companion, and they crossed the street, while Luke still followed the young man.

At last, after some trouble, Mrs. Lothrop's rooms were reached, and he was admitted.

The lady herself came forward, her handkerchief to her eyes, and mechanically she extended her hand. The children clustered around, the older crying bitterly, and the younger looking plaintively from one to the other, and sobbing, not knowing why.

Clarence, of course, found himself in a very unenviable situation, and proposed to retire, when he was interrupted by Mrs. Lothrop, in a voice choked with sobs:

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Ormsby, but we have a very great sorrow: little Ann—Annie is dead," and her voice faltered, and lost itself in sobs and tears.

What could Clarence say? He felt very deeply the sorrow which weighed so heavily upon them, and sympathised with them greatly. He had a warm heart and was visibly affected.

"Come," sobbed the grief-stricken mother, "you shall see—see her—her."

Mutely he followed to the opposite corner of the room, where upon two chairs rested a coffin.

In the coffin, not an expensive one, but the best they could afford, lay the inanimate and breathless form of the beautiful child. Her little hands, so transparent, were crossed upon the breast, the face so calm and lovely in life, looked angelic. The lips were slightly parted, the eyes were closed, the long lashes just sweeping the marble cheeks; a smile rested upon the thin little features—the smile that was born of her innocent soul as it met its Creator, and in its flight to the portals of heaven, left its imprint upon the earthly face, that it might linger to cheer the mother's heart.

Reverently, with all thoughts of his own troubles dispersed to the wind, Clarence Ormsby gazed upon the little child. He heard the mother's sob of anguish, he heard the child's plaintive cry for the loss of her baby sister, he saw the upturned face of the



youngest, painful in its doubt, and sobbing because her sister did.

Clarence was strangely moved. He had never appreciated his own blessings until that moment. A tear dropped from his eye, it was not weak or boyish, it was the tribute of his warm, noble, manly heart. He turned away, his whole being in sympathy with those afflicted, he could not gaze upon the child, he knew it would unman him.

For a short time, not a sound was heard save the bubblings from the hearts overcharged with grief. Clarence took a survey of the apartment.

"Ah," he murmured, "it is said that the poor are insensible to grief, that a loss of one makes so many the less to support. What a cruel, ignorant mind that must be, that could father such a thought." He sighed. "Ah! I have seen to-night that the poor feel afflictions of this kind with more and bitter keenness than the rich do; 'tis all the former have, the enjoyment of each other's company and love; when this is taken then the basis, which a semblance of resignation or contentment can rest upon, is withdrawn, and the heart nearly breaks."

Mrs. Lothrop removed her handkerchief, made an effort to speak, and said:

"Tell Miss Florence, please, that my child called for her during the last night that she remained upon earth, and in fact, with nearly her last breath."

Here the mother's voice again failed her, and for a few moments she wept bitterly.

Recovering her self-possession she continued:

"You can never know how much we have to thank your dear sister for, Mr. Ormsby. We have not been so comfortable for a long time." For a moment the return to the subject overpowered her, then she resumed: "Oh, how I thanked heaven and Miss Florence for the money that enabled me to clothe my babe decently for her last resting-place."

Again the tears burst forth, and Clarence, on whom her earnestness had a great effect, turned his head to dash a tear-drop from his eye.

Clarence felt that his presence, and the constant recurrence to the subject, only added to the poignancy of their grief, accordingly he arose to depart. As he neared the door, he said:

"Mrs. Lothrop, will you accept this as a token of my sympathy and good-will?"

And he held out a note towards her.

"Oh, Mr. Ormsby, really, it is not right, I—"

"No more; the lesson I have learned to-night is worth treble that! You will not refuse my gift of friendship?"

The tears came to her eyes afresh at this exhibition of kindness, and between her sobs she accepted it with many thanks. She looked at it, 'twas a ten-pound note.

After much stumbling, Clarence reached the street. The night was as dark as Erebus and he was unaccustomed to the place. He placed his hand upon his pistols. Clarence Ormsby was no coward, as we have seen, but knew the character of the locality, also knew that although a man's fists are excellent weapons when he has a single and unarmed adversary, that they do not amount to much when arrayed against two men who are armed, and he knew that the "pads" of that locality generally travelled and robbed in couples.

He walked slowly along, and by degrees his thoughts reverted to the scenes he had just witnessed. He became so deep in his meditation that he did not exercise his usual precaution. He was awakened from his dreaming by a sound of heavy breathing, which he imagined proceeded from some object between himself and the house. In an instant his mind was clear, and every faculty alive to his position. He peered through the darkness as best he could, and strained every nerve to catch the slightest sound.

At that instant his arm was strongly grasped from the rear. With a wrench which almost dislocated his shoulder he drew it away, and quickly turning, sent his right arm with terrific force out into the darkness; an oath, a fall of a heavy body, and he knew his effort was not fruitless. He had no time to think, however, before a stunning blow upon the back of his head nearly deprived him of his senses; he reeled, he staggered; two men approached and attempted to grasp him; a partial sense of his situation returned; he fired, and heard a shriek of pain, and another fall, mingled with the words:

"Curse him, he has killed him."

The pain in the head was dreadful, but by superhuman efforts he managed to keep his senses clear. He walked slowly backward, he heard a footfall behind him—he partially turned round—fired again—the bullet went wide of his mark—a hand was lifted high in the air—a billet descended upon his head with crushing force, and like a log Clarence Ormsby fell to the earth.

Luke approached, and by the faint beams of a dark lantern which he carried, gazed upon the body. He

uttered a low, fiendish laugh, and then, in hurried whispers, called the two men. They approached, he gave some instructions in a hasty manner, and then ran rapidly away.

In less than two minutes the sound of wheels were heard, and a waggon was rapidly driven to the spot.

The body of the man whom Clarence had killed was placed in the waggon. Then, after gagging and binding, the senseless form of Clarence was lifted into the conveyance, and placed by the side of the man whom he had shot in self-defence. A india-rubber cloth was taken from the seat and placed over them.

The remaining villain quickly mounted and seated himself beside the driver. Luke Gibbons got in and assumed his station at the head of the inanimate man. The word was given, the horse started, and they flew through street after street at a rapid pace. The sound and jarring soon awoke Clarence, who at once understood the horror of his situation; he struggled, used all the strength he had to break his bonds, but 'twas useless; Luke had calculated upon this, and had seen that he was securely bound.

Luke bent down and hissed in Clarence's ear:

"You'll toss me out on the pavement again, will you? Who is the master now? You'd like to know who your father is, wouldn't you?" These words seemed to carry a dread meaning with them—"his father?" Oh, what evil had befallen him? He lay there, suffering the most intense mental and physical pain; the perspiration poured off from his head, his heart beat wildly; surely, earth had no greater torture than this. And still Luke continued: "You are in a nice place, ain't ye? I am a misshapen dog, am I? What would you give to get away from the dog, now, eh? Nice ride you are having! Wouldn't you like to see that baby-faced sister of your's, eh?"

Clarence's blood had been for the last few moments in a state of fermentation; this last taunt of his deformed persecutor nearly drove him mad. He struggled with the strength of frenzy to burst his bonds—if he could have placed his hands upon Luke at that moment he would have torn him limb from limb.

Still Luke continued his taunts, and the waggon rolled on. At last it stopped, Clarence was blindfolded and led a devious route, and again placed in a vehicle. Again they rode on, and after some time had passed, stopped again. He heard the sound of water, he was placed in a boat—and still Luke's accursed voice mingled harshly with the mockery of the waves. A blue film passed before his eyes, the world seemed to recede, and his heart cried out:

"Father, mother, Florence, farewell! Oh, heaven, must I die thus?"

(To be continued.)

## ADELCEA.

BY THE

Author of "The Beauty of Paris," "Wild Redburn," &c.

### CHAPTER XI.

MEANWHILE, Lord Charles, chafing with shame and no little rage, had galloped on at headlong speed along the road leading to Stepmore Retreat.

He had ridden more than a mile before he turned his head to make a remark to Sir Blaize when he discovered the absence of the latter. He halted instantly, and his followers respectfully drew near him.

"Where is Sir Blaize?" he demanded, as he gazed back upon the course he had pursued.

One of his followers replied:

"Sir Blaize waved his hand to us to follow your lordship, while he remained to speak to the attendant of the veiled lady."

"Veiled lady," said the young lord, spitefully. "Rather say the veiled witch. Here, Carew, draw near and see if there be a bruise upon my cheek."

The man addressed rode near and Lord Charles turned his fair and beardless cheek towards him for his scrutiny.

"There is a slight redness, my lord, nothing more."

"No disfigurement? no tearing of the skin? no swelling? nothing to mar the perfect shape of my face, I trust, Carew?" asked the vain nobleman, anxiously.

"Nothing, my lord."

"I am right heartily rejoiced to hear you say so, Carew. The venomous woman gave me a sharp tap with her mercurial palm. I would I knew who she were, that I might have her ducked in a horsepond. Saw you aught in her appearance by which you might recognise her, should you meet her, Carew?"

"She was too closely veiled, my lord, for her face to be seen, and yet there was that about the movement of her arm and hand as she—I beg your pardon, my lord," said Carew, pausing.

"As she slapped me, Carew. Out with it."

"There was something in her manner, my lord, and in the boldness of the act, that made me think of Mistress Molina Maudstone."

Lord Charles flushed very red for an instant, and said, angrily:

"Fellow, how dare you speak that name in my presence! Did I not forbid you ever to mention the name of that woman in my presence?"

"Pardon me, my lord, I forgot the command of your lordship in replying to your question," answered the man, retiring much abashed.

"Here!" said Lord Charles, quickly. "Since the woman's name has been mentioned, tell me if you have heard of her of late."

"Only that she is living in retirement somewhere in London. Perhaps I did wrong, my lord, yet one day, for a whim, I followed Sir Blaize secretly, as he walked about the city, and saw that he visited a house in Heapstead Street, where he met Mistress Molina Maudstone."

"Eh!" exclaimed Lord Charles, staring at the speaker. "Are you sure it was she?"

"As sure as I am that I am speaking to your lordship," replied Carew, emphatically.

"And when was this?"

"Less than a year ago; aye, my lord, it was not four months ago."

"Not four months ago! And Sir Blaize has repeatedly sworn to me that he has not seen nor heard of her for more than a year."

"As for that, my lord," continued Carew, who was delighted in being honoured before his fellows with the notice of his lord, "as for that, Sir Blaize may desire to marry the lady."

Lord Charles laughed maliciously, and exclaimed:

"I wish he would! I wish he would, Carew! The old fellow, for all he cringes so to his superiors, has a furious temper of his own, and were he and that tigress of a woman to wed, by my soul they would tear each other to shreds at their first quarrel. But why should Sir Blaize desire to speak with the attendant of the veiled witch that struck me?"

"That I cannot tell, my lord."

"He tarries very long," muttered Sir Charles. "I wish he would hasten, for I would be at Stepmore Retreat before darkness sets in, and like not to arrive there without Sir Blaize."

He gazed again back over his course, and said, sharply:

"I cannot see why Sir Blaize should remain behind so long. Ride back, Carew, and see why he delays."

"I hear the galloping of a horse, my lord," said one of the attendants, as Carew was about to ride back.

"So do I," exclaimed Sir Charles. "Wait, Carew, it may be that Sir Blaize is coming."

In a moment after a horse appeared around the bend in the high hedge, plunging along heavily at full speed, but riderless.

A glance showed Lord Charles that the body of Sir Blaize was attached to the saddle by one foot, the saddle having turned with its rider, and his foot being entangled and fast in the stirrup.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Lord Charles. "He must be dead!"

His followers instantly checked and caught the terrified horse, and one of them, drawing a knife, cut the stirrup leather, so that Sir Blaize was at once disunited from the saddle.

"Is he dead?" asked Lord Charles, as he gazed upon the bruised and mangled face.

"No, my lord," replied Carew, who had dismounted and was examining the knight's hurts. "He is very far from being a dead man, though badly stunned and shockingly bruised. No bones are broken."

"You should know, Carew," said Lord Charles, "as you have some knowledge of such things. You are both surgeon and physician, I have heard."

"I practised, my lord, quite extensively, before I entered your lordship's service as secretary. Sir Blaize, though badly hurt, will soon be upon his feet again, unless he has received some great internal injury."

"It matters very little to any one, I imagine, whether he be dead or alive," said Lord Charles, with a scoffing kind of laugh, as he gazed at Carew, who continued to examine the unconscious man.

"It matters something to me," muttered Carew, yet not so loud as to attract the attention of the young lord. "It matters a great deal to your lordship also, as you may some day discover."

He was a very small, thin, and active man, with a dark, intelligent face lighted up by a pair of large, bright black eyes. He soon concluded his offices about the knight, and said:

"It may be hours before Sir Blaize speaks again, my lord. We must place him upon a good bed as soon as we can."

"He will be no light load to those who carry him. Perhaps you and Young had better remain here with him while I ride on with the others to Stepmore Retreat, and send back assistance and a litter, if such a thing can be procured."

"We need no help, my lord," replied Carew,

promptly. Here are four of us. We can easily make a litter—"

"Very well, very well; as you please, Carew," interrupted Lord Charles, impatiently. "I will ride on, for it will soon be quite dark." And, saying no more, the hard-hearted young nobleman rode away from his bruised and helpless companion with no more care for him upon his mind than if Sir Blaise had been a hound instead of a man crippled in his service.

## CHAPTER XII.

We must now return, for a time, to Stepmore Retreat, where we left Master Stepmore at the close of a previous chapter, moving towards a large iron-bound chest, hidden beneath a heap of dusty and mould-covered volumes.

Leaning over the chest, Master Stepmore soon threw aside the piles of books, and taking a key from his bosom, inserted it in the lock. Sixteen years had passed since the merchant had withdrawn that key from that lock. The key, for so many years attached to a golden chain, had rested upon his heart. The lock, for as many years, had been hidden beneath a mouldering volume.

The key, like the heart and mind of the merchant, was stout and bright; and the lock, like the volumes which had concealed it, was rusty and dogmatic, for it refused to yield so much as a hair's-breadth to the key, though it was bright and polished, and inserted by a practised hand.

"It will not yield," said the merchant, after several vain attempts to shoot back the rusty bolts of the obstinate lock. "You have well kept your trust," he added, as he paused and sat down upon the chest, for he was a feeble man. "And I, too, have held mine as faithfully. But the time is fast drawing near, old friend, when we must give our trust into the keeping of another."

He remained seated upon the chest, plunged in thoughts of the past, and heedless that the room grew darker and darker, as the light of twilight deepened into the dusk of night. He was recalling to his mind many scenes and incidents of his young manhood, and of his more mature life, so that he did not raise his head from his breast until Sir Bertram returned with Adelia, each bearing a lamp.

"Why, father!" exclaimed the maiden, in surprise, "has no one brought you a light?"

"I did not notice that darkness had crept upon me," replied the merchant, his deep and hollow voice sounding more sad than usual. His features seemed, if possible, more care-worn and melancholy, too, than they were wont to be when he addressed his adopted daughter. They glowed with pride and pleasure, however, as his eyes fell upon the martial figure and noble features of his son, who was now clad in a full suit of the armour in use at that day.

"I have put it all on, you see," said Bertram, as his father gazed upon him. "Even to the helmet, and my golden spurs. But why are you sitting upon that chest, my father?"

"Here, Bertram," replied the merchant, as he stood up, "your fingers may do easily what mine have long lost power to do. Try to unlock this chest, and then lift the lid for me."

"At last," said Sir Bertram, with a slight laugh, as he placed his lamp upon a table, and advanced towards the chest. "I have for many a year wondered what was in that old chest, and had you not, even in my boyhood, so often warned me never to so much as touch a book that lay upon it, I believe I should have tried to make a key fit its lock."

He grasped the key with his powerful fingers, but a single wrench snapped it into fragments.

"There," said he, "I have broken the key."

"No matter, Bertram," observed his father, "the chest must be opened."

Sir Bertram, glancing about him, soon found a heavy hammer, and with a few blows so shattered the lock that he was enabled to raise the lid, and see the interior of the chest.

"Take out that which you see," said the merchant, "and place it upon the table."

Sir Bertram gazed earnestly into the chest, glanced as earnestly at his father, and replied:

"The chest is empty, father."

"Empty!" exclaimed the amazed merchant, starting violently forward. "Empty! it cannot be, Bertram!"

His voice rose nearly to a shrill scream, and his pale features were fearfully agitated. Sir Bertram had never seen the thin and worn face of his father so convulsed with mental agony as it was at that moment. The merchant, in his surprise, had let fall his staff and crutch and sprung forward. His sudden vigour gave way before he could look into the open chest, and he would have fallen had not Sir Bertram sprung towards him and caught him in his arms.

"Lead me forward," said the merchant, almost

gaspingly. "Empty! Good heavens, how came it empty? Let me see! Let me see!"

Aided by his son, he leaned forward and stared into the empty chest.

"Too true! too true!" he groaned. "It is empty! all my care—all my precaution—all my secrecy for naught. Robbed! robbed! and perhaps disgraced, dishonoured! Oh, Bertram, Bertram, my son, this is terrible!"

There was so much anguish in his face and in his accents that tears sprang to the eyes of Adelia Louvaine, while the handsome features of his son expressed more than he could speak.

"If you have been robbed, my dear father," said Sir Bertram, as he assisted the merchant to a couch, "the disgrace and the dishonour belong to the robber. I knew not that you kept gold or silver at Stepmore Retreat."

"Gold or silver?" exclaimed Master Stepmore. "There was neither gold nor silver in the chest, that I know—"

But at this moment he heard a firm and rapid step approaching along the hall, and paused to behold one who was a stranger to him, but not to Sir Bertram, who instantly exclaimed:

"Ah, Hume! So you crossed in safety. Come in, come in, and tell us how it fared with you among the Infidels? We recognised the banner of Sir Otto Dare, on the other side of the river, and judged that it was you who led the troop towards the broken ford. Have any succeeded in crossing?"

"Sir Otto Dare alone has crossed, Sir Bertram," replied Hume, as his powerful and intelligent eye glanced keenly about him.

The merchant, after a single glance at the face of his son's attendant, had closed his eyes, as if absorbed in his own painful thoughts, but as he heard Sir Otto Dare, on the other side of the river, and judged that it was you who led the troop towards the broken ford. Have any succeeded in crossing?"

On hearing the news told by Edwin Hume, Adelia Louvaine turned very pale, and clasped her hands, saying, in a startled tone:

"Oh, he is coming!"

"But we do not know that," remarked Sir Bertram.

"And if he comes he will come without his followers at his back; so think nothing of that matter at present. Go, Hume, and report your arrival to the servants. I have told them to expect and make ready for your coming. Your garments are wet, and you have fasted since morn."

Edwin Hume, however, though he bowed respectfully to Sir Bertram as the latter concluded, advanced towards Master Stepmore, and said:

"I am speaking to Master Richard Stepmore, am I not?"

"You are," replied the merchant, a sensation of dread and evil creeping around his heart.

"Aye," said Sir Bertram, who was familiar with the mysterious bluntness of his attendant, though not with hearing him use the polished speech and courtly accent Edwin Hume had used as he addressed the merchant. "This is my father, Hume, of whom you have often heard me speak. But retire, my good fellow, for we have private matters to speak of. A robbery has been committed—"

Sir Bertram paused, amazed at the action of his attendant man-at-arms. Edwin Hume, while Sir Bertram was speaking, knelt on one knee near the couch of the merchant, drew his dagger, and making the sign of the cross with its edge upon the floor, exclaimed:

"In the name of Mary, Queen of Scotland!" and struck his dagger's point into the floor, left the weapon sticking there, and rose to his feet.

"She is there! That maiden is the child!" cried Master Stepmore.

"Pure, virtuous, unsullied, innocent, as she was when left in your arms sixteen years ago, Richard Stepmore?" demanded Hume, in a stern and commanding tone.

"To that I can swear as I would to heaven," replied the merchant, whose pale cheek began to glow, and whose eyes began to sparkle with anger.

Sir Bertram's arm was at the moment around Adelia's waist, and in his surprise it remained there, while both he and the maiden exchanged glances of wonder and alarm.

"One would think she and he were plighted lovers, Master Stepmore," said Edwin Hume, haughtily.

"Not with my consent, man, whoever you may be. You have made the sign and spoken the words which were spoken in this room sixteen years ago," said the merchant, "and I have kept my promise to him who spoke them then. The maiden is as pure and spotless now as she was then, nor with my consent the wife of any man, high or low. I did not engage to enchain her heart, nor to crush its love for an honourable man. Peace, Bertram," he added, as the impetuous young knight was about to interfere with tongue and hand. "This man has a right to speak as he does."

Sir Bertram's hand had sprung to his sword-hilt already, and the light gleamed upon its blade as he half unsheathed it; but on hearing the command of his father, he withdrew his hand from the weapon. Yet he did not withdraw his other arm from the waist of the maiden, for she clung to him as if for support, while her beautiful eyes were fixed upon the tall and almost gigantic form of Edwin Hume.

The latter, whose quick glance darting from beneath its heavy black brows as lightning leaps from a thundercloud, alone told that he had observed the menacing gesture of the young knight, gazed steadily upon the face of the merchant and said:

"With her, Richard Stepmore, you received a casket."

"I did."

"And as you received it, you pledged your oath and your honour, never to attempt to open that casket until sixteen years should have elapsed, with no tidings of him to whom you pledged oath and honour."

"I did. He who dares to say that I have violated my oath, or sullied my honour lies," replied Master Stepmore.

"You placed the casket in that chest," said Edwin Hume, in the same stern and haughty tone, "in the presence of the man from whom you received it—I am here to receive the maiden and the casket."

"The maiden stands there," replied Master Stepmore, "as I promised that she should, if she and I lived for the stipulated time."

"Stay," cried Sir Bertram, no longer able to restrain his desire to speak. "Edwin Hume, it may be that you are some great lord in disguise—in the disguise you have used to spy about me and my father; address me, and not that feeble old man. There is a mystery here which I do not understand, but whether you be peer or peasant you shall lower your tone in speaking to Master Richard Stepmore. Heaven defend our poor wits!" he added, as his sword flashed from its sheath, "we have been blundering our vague fears lest Sir Otto Dare might enter this house and say, 'I claim Adelia Louvaine!' when here enters my servant, Edwin Hume, and says, 'I am come to claim the maiden!' Well, Edwin Hume, or Edwin Dog, if it pleases you, here I am, Sir Bertram Stepmore, to defend the maiden and bid you go away speedily."

"Peace! peace! my son," cried the merchant. "You must not come between me and my honour."

Master Stepmore arose as he spoke and grasped the sword-arm of his son. Sir Bertram could have tossed aside the feeble grasp as easily as he could that of a child, but he revered while he loved his father, and, therefore, though his attitude remained threatening towards Edwin Hume, he did not advance against him.

The latter had laid his hand upon his sword-hilt as the knight drew his weapon, but he seemed content with this precaution against attack, for he did not step back nor alter his haughty air.

"Your honour, my father," said Sir Bertram, "is no less dear to me than my own. But I have a right to know the name, rank, and authority of this man, who, but to-day my servant, has presumed to assume the air of lord and master in my father's house, and to use towards my father—"

The young knight was still speaking when Edwin Hume interrupted his words with:

"Sir Bertram, you are right. You should know something of my right to be here and to claim the maiden and the casket. It may be, too, that Master Stepmore desires to know who I am. It may be also that he does not recognise in me the person from whom he received the maiden and the casket. Another may have designs to claim them. Listen, Sir Bertram, and I will briefly state how it is that I have a right to act as I do."

"Sixteen years ago a horseman with no companion except the infant he carried in his arms, halted before the gate of this house. He dismounted, and entered the avenue, having the infant concealed under his cloak, though the night was well advanced and exceedingly dark. He wished to see but one man, and to be seen by but one man. That man was the owner of this house, Master Richard Stepmore. There were many and important reasons why the stranger should not be seen except by Richard Stepmore, and I have not time now to disclose those reasons. Concealment was necessary then, and concealment is necessary now."

"The stranger wished to enter the presence of Master Richard Stepmore unseen by any other occupant of the house. Twice, with the utmost caution, he made a circuit of the house, dreading each instant lest the sleeping infant he carried might awake, and by its cries alarm the slumbering household."

"His first circuit around the house proved that there was a light burning in but one room; in his caution he made another circuit, when he paused beneath that window, Sir Bertram—for it was in this room that the solitary lamp was burning. The win-

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dow is not five feet from the ground, and the stranger looked in easily.

"You, Master Stepmore, were seated at that table reading. You were alone, except that upon that couch behind, lay a sleeping boy, perhaps six or eight years of age. You were reading some manuscript, Master Stepmore, and while you read you sighed often. At length you laid down the manuscript and knelt near the sleeping boy.

"The stranger was about to make his presence known, but respect for your attitude, for you were praying over the lad, made him pause until you arose. As you did so your eyes met those of the stranger. You were about to utter some exclamation, or to give some alarm, when the stranger made a gesture, which you understood, for you were a friend of the imprisoned Mary, Queen of Scotland.

"The stranger lifted the sleeping child in both hands and extended it towards you. You immediately received it into your arms and tenderly placed it upon the couch by the side of the sleeping boy; and as you did so, the stranger sprang through the window and stood by your side. Is this not all true, Master Stepmore?"

"All. I do not deny it, sir," replied the merchant, whose voice would not have trembled had he not pressing heavily upon his mind the fact that the chest was there before him, empty and plundered.

"My father's voice trembles as I have never before heard it," thought Sir Bertram. "He must be greatly moved by this man's words."

Adelcia could only tremble. She could not connect her thoughts. It began to dawn upon her mind that this mysterious Edwin Hume might possess a right to separate her not only from Master Stepmore, whom she loved, but also from Bertram, whom she adored.

Often while Edwin Hume was speaking, his eyes glanced towards her face, but she could not read nor understand their expression. She could not imagine whether he was about to reveal himself as her friend or as her foe.

He continued with no pause after receiving Master Stepmore's reply.

"The stranger extended his hand to you, Richard Stepmore, and your hand clasped his in the secret grasp known only to the leaders in the great plot which had failed to rescue Mary of Scotland from the assassination Elizabeth of England meditated against her. You did not know the name nor the rank of the stranger, but you recognised and responded to the grasp which made you and him equals and brothers, no matter what his rank or yours might be. Then the stranger unbuckled from his belt a small casket made of ebony and inlaid with gold. The casket was more than locked, for it was bound with three broad belts of steel, one of which covered the lock. The casket had the royal cipher of England inlaid in gold upon its lid, and with this cipher the arms of two noble houses of England. Am I speaking truly?"

"You are, sir," replied the agitated merchant, forcing his eyes to avoid the empty chest.

"The stranger then desired you to kneel with him and repeat the solemn oath of fidelity which bound together the leaders in the scheme to aid the unfortunate Mary. You did so, and then the stranger uttered these words:

"Master Stepmore, into your hands, by one who has a right to ask your aid, even though your life be forfeited by your act, this infant girl and this casket are given. He who places them thus must fly from England, and may never return. His life is in danger, and Elizabeth of England has marked him as one to be slain. You are unsuspected, nor is it probable that you will be. The child and the casket are left with you. You receive her pure, spotless, unsullied, and thus he who delivers her to you hopes to receive her should heaven ever restore her to him. You will pledge your honour as an upright man, and your oath as a leader of our secret order, to keep the child as you now receive it."

"You, Master Stepmore, hesitated to so bind yourself, for you said that if she lived to be a woman she would probably love and be beloved."

"Then the stranger limited the time of your pledge to sixteen years, for if he lived so long, he said, he would certainly return in person or send some messenger for your guidance. Upon this condition you pledged your word of honour and your oath as a member of the secret order. Thus, besides guarding the infant to the best of your ability from infancy to womanhood, you swore to restore her to him who placed her in your care, or to him who should relate to you all that passed during the interview of which I now speak. The sign by which you were to recognise him or anyone from him was this:

Here Edwin Hume again knelt on one knee, grasped his dagger, made the sign of the cross upon the floor, thrust the point of his weapon into the centre of this cross, and exclaimed:

"In the name of Mary Queen of Scotland!"

"I recognise you not as being the man from whom I received the infant and the casket, but as one authorised, by your knowledge of what passed between him and me, to demand them," said Master Stepmore, in a hollow voice.

"Oh, heaven!" sighed Adelcia, and trembling violently. "Am I to be torn from those I love, and given over to strangers!"

She did not utter her thoughts aloud, but Sir Bertram read her anguish in her eyes and face.

He was amazed at the turn events had so suddenly taken. He had returned from Ireland with a heart as gay and light as a bubble, fearing no evil, and suspecting none.

For years he had believed that his father secretly smiled on his love for Adelcia, and it was from him alone that he had ever dreamed that the slightest opposition could arise. He had been startled on learning of the suit of Sir Otto Dare, but as it became apparent that Edwin Hume, his attendant, wielded a secret power over his father, the stout heart of the young knight beat fast with fear and surprise.

He felt the form of this beautiful maiden trembling at his side, and his arm tightened its embrace upon her slender waist, whilst the grasp upon his sword-hilt became fiercely rigid.

"They shall not tear you from me, Adelcia," he whispered, and he meant all he said.

He would have addressed Edwin Hume with angry and harsh words, but he caught his father's eye, and waited to hear more.

Edwin Hume continued, and in a less haughty tone than he had hitherto used:

"You do not recognise in me the man from whom you received the maiden and the casket, nor do you believe me to be that man, yet you are ready to keep your oath inviolate?"

"I have lived to be an old man," replied the merchant, in a tone of pride, "but I cannot remember when Richard Stepmore failed to keep his word. You may be the person from whom I received the infant and the casket, but if so, time has greatly changed your appearance, or perhaps your present garb disguises what my eye might recognise."

"Yet I am he," said Edwin Hume. "Time has greatly changed me since, sixteen years ago, I sprang through that window. Then I was not thirty years of age, and now I am nearer fifty than forty. Then I was slender, with a fair and unwrinkled face. Now I am brown and time-worn."

"Your hair and beard are as black as mine," said Sir Bertram, with some tinge of suspicion in his tone.

"They are dyed, Sir Bertram. But for that you would see that my hair and beard are as snowy white as the hair of your father. But he who gave you the infant and the casket, Master Stepmore, wore no beard, except a moustache, and upon his right cheek was a scar, deep and long, which he bade you remember as he placed his finger upon it, and said:

"This scar will be plainly visible as long as I live. I am the father of this infant girl, and if ever I claim her from you I will show you this scar."

Edwin Hume lifted his hand and turned aside the massy, flowing beard which covered his cheek, thus plainly revealing a deep and livid scar.

"Ah, then this stranger is my father," thought Adelcia, almost ready to sink to the floor, so great was her agitation.

"Wait," whispered Sir Bertram, as the cautious merchant closely examined the scar pointed out by Edwin Hume. "He may be an impostor. Certainly he has acted as one towards me."

"You are the man from whom I received the infant and the casket," said Master Stepmore. "The time has not elapsed during which you were to receive her as you gave her to me. You said then that she was your daughter, and I believed you. I have no reason to disbelieve you now. From you I received her, and you have every right to claim her. There she stands, a beautiful and virtuous maiden. I was about to speak of the events of that night, when your coming interrupted me. You have told what I was about to tell, for at twelve o'clock this night the sixteen years would have elapsed. I would, had you not appeared, have given her to my son for his wife, as soon as the obligation of my oath no longer bound me."

"You have suspected who I am—who she is?" asked Edwin Hume, coldly.

"Had you spoken those words as an assertion, sir," said the merchant, haughtily, "I would have replied, it is false. As you have made them a question, I answer that I believed the man who left her with me to have been a gentleman, perhaps a nobleman. I simply suspected this to be true, and nothing more, sir. She would have been no dearer to me had I known her to be the child of earl, prince, or king. She would have been as dear to me had she been the child of a beggar, being, as she was, lovely, gentle,

and affectionate. She was helpless and forsaken by her father, and I adopted her as my daughter, caring not a whit, sir, whether the blood of a peasant or that of titled Norman robbers ran in her veins. I should have kept my oath as inviolate to you, believing you to be nameless or my lord duke—and you may be either, for all I know or care, sir. As time rolled on I became convinced that he who left her with me was dead. I gave her the name you said you wished she should be called, Adelcia Louvaine, and I have regarded her as my daughter, and secretly desired that she might soon be so indeed, as the beloved wife of my son.

"I am deeply grateful to you, Master Stepmore," interrupted Edwin Hume, with no little emotion in his voice, though his manner was still quite stately. Sir Bertram thought, "I should be far more grateful, perhaps, did I not see that while you made me your debtor, she has looked upon you as her father, and will ever love you more than she can love me."

Adelcia was about to speak, scarcely knowing what to say, when a gesture from the merchant checked her.

### CHAPTER XIII.

"You cannot expect that she should now love you," said Master Stepmore. "She may learn to love you if you do not crush her heart by forbidding her to love my son."

"And why should I forbid that, Richard Stepmore?" demanded Edwin Hume.

"Man, whoever you may be," exclaimed the merchant. "I have said that I have not suspected who you are, except that you were of what is called gentle blood—though, heaven knows, the fiercest, worst, and most wicked wretches of history sprang from this same 'gentle blood.' I said that I had no suspicion of the maiden's parentage, beyond the fact that one who might be of gentle blood had abandoned her to my care, and asserted that he was her father. Neither could I even say to myself that she was a child born in lawful wedlock—neither did I care, so far as she was dear to me. But of late, and very recently, long since I desired that she might live to be the wife of my son, I have begun to imagine that her veins are filled with blood far nobler—as 'tis called—than that which flows in mine. Now if this be true, sir, you must, being her father, be a noble, and therefore you will scorn the thought of consenting to wed her to the son of a tradesman, though that son of a tradesman be Sir Bertram Stepmore, as noble and honourable a knight as any Howard, Devereux or Dudley of them all."

The eyes of Master Stepmore blazed as he spoke these words, and his voice rang clear and strong.

Edwin Hume, as we shall for the present call him, answered coldly:

"Now is not the time to speak of those matters. At least, my daughter will find that though circumstances have forced me to conceal from her the fact that her father lived, he may love her as fondly as Master Stepmore. Let us now speak of the casket." "The casket!" echoed the merchant, in an altered tone.

"Yes, for the loss of that would destroy the maiden. Did I not tell you that, Master Stepmore, when I gave you the casket," said Edwin Hume.

"It is lost," replied Master Stepmore, in a firm voice, like that of a brave man who defies the worst.

"Lost!" exclaimed Edwin Hume. "If that be true then she is indeed lost, for Sir Otto Dare must be in possession of the casket. You placed it in that chest. You said that it would be safe there. I remember that you said that it should be buried with the infant, if she were to die before the sixteen years elapsed. Lost! and yet it seems but recently opened," he added, as he examined the shattered lock.

"Very recently," replied the merchant. "It was broken open the moment before you appeared at the door. As I said, I was about to relate to Adelcia and to my son these things of which you have spoken, and I desired to show them the casket, upon which, I have not looked since the night when you saw me place it in that chest! The sixteen years during which I was not to open, nor to allow others to open the casket, expires as that clock strikes twelve to-night, and I intended then to open it, that I might learn something of the parentage of Adelcia."

"The key broke in the rusty lock. Here is the broken key. You will find more of it in the lock. My son then opened the chest, and I was amazed to find it as you see, empty. Do you believe me?"

Edwin Hume bent his keen and powerful eye steadily upon the face of the merchant; but found his gaze met by one as clear, defiant, and upright as his own.

"I believe you, Richard Stepmore," he said. "But if the casket falls into the hands of Elizabeth of England, this maiden will be thrown into the Tower."

"Thrown into the Tower!" exclaimed Sir Bertram. "Of what crime can she be accused?"

"I cannot now make that known to you, Sir Bertram," replied Edwin Hume, gravely. "I did not intend to bring this matter upon you so suddenly, Master Stepmore. It was my purpose to reveal my identity gradually, and to tell you why I appear as I do now, and why I have served Sir Bertram in the disguise of a common soldier."

"But events have crowded thick and fast upon us. Sir Otto Dare, upon whom I have had my eye for a long time, is coming to Stepmore Retreat. I recognised his banner before Sir Bertram crossed the river, and, therefore, I remained behind, wishing to learn why Sir Otto came hither, and very sure in my own mind that he came to bear away this maiden. I have conversed with him, and I have learned that he has no other business of importance in this vicinity. Sir Otto is now upon this side of the river, and may make his appearance at any moment."

"He is, you said, alone," remarked Sir Bertram.

"He is alone, or was, and it is probable that none of his followers can join him until to-morrow. But he may carry with him the royal command and signature of the jealous queen. Would any in England dare resist, or even to slight the mandates of the despotic Elizabeth?"

A deep pause followed these words, and that profound silence was a most eloquent negative to the question. The fierce, vindictive and imperious daughter of Henry the Eighth, had made her name as powerful as any army over all England.

Edwin Hume, during this silence, stooped and picked up something from the interior of the chest. He ended the silence by asking:

"How came this in the chest?" and as he spoke he extended his hand with that which he had picked up, in the centre of his palm.

"It is nothing more than a button, a small diamond-shaped turquoise button," said Sir Bertram, carelessly.

"Have you any like it, Sir Bertram, or have any of the servants of this house any like it?" demanded Edwin Hume.

"No," replied Sir Bertram, while Adelcia examined the button. "At least, not to my knowledge; yet, as I have been absent for many months, I cannot say so with certainty."

"But I can," said Adelcia. "Father—for so my heart will ever call you," she added, as she gave the turquoise button to the merchant, "father, have you not seen such as this before?"

Master Stepmore, after an instant's examination, exclaimed:

"As I live, when Sir Otto Dare prowled about Stepmore Retreat, in the disguise of a French merchant, his sleeves were spangled with such gaudy ornaments."

"Sir Otto Dare!" cried Edwin Hume, "I suspected that he was in possession of the casket."

"Cunning fellow!" muttered the merchant, as he thought of Sir Otto. "He managed to open that chest and deceive even my vigilance. But," he added, aloud, and addressing Edwin Hume, "though this is evidence that Sir Otto Dare has had his hands within the chest, why should he have placed them there?"

"I might explain why, had I time," replied Edwin Hume; "but at present it is the safety of the maiden we must consider. I have hoped that my only enemy, or rather the only enemy of Adelcia Louvaine, in this matter, would be Sir Otto Dare; but since he is, doubtless, master of the casket, he is far more formidable than ever, and can, if he has not already, add the hate and power of Elizabeth to his own rapacious cunning. There is no permanent safety in England for Adelcia Louvaine while Queen Elizabeth lives, if the queen has learned the contents of the casket. It may be that Sir Otto has kept this secret in his bosom; yet he may at any time disclose it."

"Then it were most prudent to make an end of Sir Otto as speedily as possible," remarked Sir Bertram, "and I would be here that I might bring the work."

"He will be here too soon, I fear," said Edwin Hume, gravely. "But if he has already made known the contents of the casket, slaying him would not protect Adelcia from the violence of the queen, and certainly lead you, Sir Bertram, to the block. No, Adelcia must fly from England."

"From England! Oh, and immediately!" exclaimed Adelcia, who could not regard this mysterious Edwin Hume as her father, but only as her enemy, or, at least, an enemy to her hope and happiness.

"You cannot leave England immediately," replied Edwin Hume, as he gazed upon the pale and agitated girl. "I fear that Queen Elizabeth has learned the contents of the casket, and if so, every passport in England is doubly guarded."

"Oh, heaven help me!" cried Adelcia, as she clasped her hands. "Who and what am I that a queen, and that queen the Queen of England, should

pursue me, or so much as care whether I lived or died? Who am I? What am I?" she added, passionately.

Edwin Hume gazed at her with eyes in which there seemed to be both love and pity, but he made no reply to her question.

"Sir," said Sir Bertram, "my father, whose will has ever been law to me, has declared that you are the person from whom he received this maiden. His honour was pledged to restore her to you, and he has relinquished all claims upon her. You are her father, you say; and we cannot dispute your assertion—indeed, we have not time to do so, if we would, for we know that Sir Otto Dare desires to wed Adelcia, and we fear his power. This matter has come upon us suddenly, and it is best that Adelcia should fly. But let her fly with me, as my wife—"

"Stay," interrupted Hume, proudly, and yet there was kindness in his words. "I know you to be a most honourable, brave, and upright gentleman, Sir Bertram, for I have watched you a thousand times when you had no suspicion that you were being watched, or that Edwin Hume was other than he seemed to be. I cannot decide in your favour now, however; you are very young in years, and you are—" he paused, and Master Stepmore exclaimed: "He does not wish to hurt your feelings, my son. He means, however, that you are not of noble blood, and therefore no fit mate for Adelcia."

The merchant's tone was full of bitterness, and the gentle girl instantly knelt at his side as he lay upon the couch, clasped one of his thin hands in her soft palms, and pressing it to her lips, said:

"Dear, good, kind father!"

"No, I am not your father, Adelcia," interrupted Richard Stepmore. "There stands the man who has more right to claim you as his daughter."

"You shall ever be my father to me," cried Adelcia, "and were I a queen, I would not be too noble to wed Bertram."

"Ah, well," sighed Richard Stepmore, "we may not speak of that now. Your safety must first be secured. If, as we fear, the queen has interested herself in the matter, you will need the protection of a friend more powerful than I am, and, if I may judge from appearances, more powerful than Edwin Hume."

"You speak truly, sir," said Edwin Hume, gravely. "I am a disguised fugitive, and my life would pay for my boldness were I detected by my enemies in England. I could protect Adelcia for a day or a week, no doubt; but it may be that my enemies are already aware of my presence in England. Even if they are not, there are those who may recognise me as having been in the service of Sir Bertram, and if search be made for Adelcia, my presence near her may lead her seekers to her discovery."

"But surely I can fly with her," began Sir Bertram, but Hume checked him, saying:

"Sir Otto Dare would suspect that you had fled with her, and follow you. She cannot remain here, for Sir Otto is coming, and will assuredly be here to-morrow. Had I suspected that he was upon his way to Stepmore Retreat, I should have provided a place of temporary refuge for her. Sir Bertram, have you no powerful friend under whose protection Adelcia may be concealed for a few days, until, at least, the keenness of the search which will be made for her shall be over, or she escape from England?"

"I know of but one," replied Sir Bertram. "I saved his life in Ireland, and he swore eternal friendship to me. He seemed noble and honourable, too, and confided to me many of his hopes and secrets. But he is in London, and it would not do for Adelcia to fly thither. His house, however, is in the North of England. I refer to Lord Charles Gray, son of Duke Lewis of Trenthamdale."

As Sir Bertram spoke this name, the merchant started almost as violently as he had when the name of Sir Otto was uttered near the summer house by Adelcia.

He made no exclamation, however, though his eyes seemed to flash fire, as he arose to a sitting posture, and fixed them earnestly upon the face of his son.

"I have heard that his father is bad and treacherous," remarked Edwin Hume. "The son may be of an opposite nature."

"I am sure that he is," said Sir Bertram. "You saw him in Ireland."

"I remember him. There was something in his face which I did not like, I think. But it is idle to speak of him, as we must use speed, and he is too far away."

There was just then a rap at the door, and a servant of the house entered, saying:

"Master Stepmore, there is a party before the gate, bearing a wounded gentleman upon a rude litter, and with them is a noble lord who craves shelter for himself and his wounded friend."

"Of course he shall have it," said Master Stepmore. "Hear you his name and title?"

"They called him Lord Charles Gray, and said that the wounded gentleman was Sir Blaise Thornleigh."

"It is my friend!" exclaimed Sir Bertram. "I will hasten to meet him."

"Take care that you say nothing to him of Adelcia's relation to me," urged Hume, as Sir Bertram advanced towards the door. "I must beg that I may appear to Lord Charles as your servant or esquire still. He may remember having seen me in that character in Ireland."

Sir Bertram bowed and left the room. Adelcia, thus deprived of his support, drew nearer to the merchant, at whose side she knelt, unable to feel any sudden affection for the mysterious man who had declared himself to be her father.

"You must try to love him," whispered the merchant, as she leaned her face upon his bosom.

"Ah, he seems so cold and haughty," replied Adelcia, in the same tone. "He is doubtless some great and proud noble, and he will never consent that his daughter shall wed the son of a tradesman."

"Keep a good heart, my dear child, and all may be well," said Master Stepmore, soothingly. "Do not judge too hastily. You should not expect him to evince more warmth towards you than he does. Remember that you were but an infant when he parted from you—"

"Master Stepmore," said Edwin Hume, suddenly, "may I thank you for the kindness and love you have bestowed upon my child? I am unable at this time to do more than thank you—perhaps I may never be able to do more—"

"Sir," interrupted the merchant, coldly, "you owe me no thanks. Could any one know this gentle and beautiful maiden and not love her? Her presence from the day she first called me father has been the joy of my life. My heart is filled with bitterness as I feel that she and I are to be separated. For years, sir, it has been the dream and hope of my life to live to see her the wife of my son."

"You could readily have gained that wish, Master Stepmore, for it is plain that she and your son are devoted lovers," remarked Hume.

"Readily! When my word of honour was pledged that by no act of mine should she become the wife of any man! You little understand my character, sir," replied Richard Stepmore.

"I do well understand it, Master Stepmore. I understood it years ago, or I would not have placed my daughter in your keeping."

"The happiness of two young hearts has been suddenly broken by your coming, Edwin Hume. Why not, with a single word, win the eternal love and gratitude of your daughter, and a thousand times repay me for all my care of her? My son is a most worthy young man. You have been with him, secretly watching him, day and night. You must have seen that he is brave, noble, and honourable. You say you would repay me if you could. You can easily do that. Consent to the immediate union of Adelcia with Bertram. Together, then, let them fly from England to the Continent. Queen Elizabeth is old and failing fast. Had you not come it was my purpose to see them wedded as soon after midnight as possible. The designs of Sir Otto Dare, let them be what they may, would have been baffled. Your consent is all that is needed now."

"Master Stepmore," replied Edwin Hume, "I esteem your son, for he is indeed a most honourable gentleman. So am I, I trust. But my word is pledged as yours was pledged to me, to wed my daughter to another."

Edwin Hume averted his eyes from Adelcia's face as he uttered these words, so terrible to her.

"Oh, heaven!" she sighed; "if he clings to his pledged word as Master Stepmore has, I can never be the wife of Bertram with his consent."

"Your word, your honour, is pledged, sir!" exclaimed Richard Stepmore, in amazement.

"My word, my honour, my oath, by voice and pen," replied Edwin Hume, gravely.

"Poor boy!" thought the merchant, as the sad and despairing face of the maiden met his gaze, "he will feel the blow as keenly as thou dost, gentle girl."

He bowed his white and stately head over that of the maiden, and pressed her closely to his bosom. Edwin Hume regarded them in silence; but so much were his features concealed by his heavy beard and the vizor of his iron head-piece that their expression could not be read.

"You had not seen her nor my son when you gave this unfortunate pledge, sir?" asked the merchant, as he raised his eyes sternly.

"No, Master Stepmore, or I never should have given it."

"It was rash and cruel for a father to hazard the happiness of his child with such a pledge, no matter for what reason or under what circumstances it was given, Edwin Hume."

"It was rash and cruel, perhaps," replied Hume,



"and yet I had your pledge that she should be un-  
plighted and heart-free, Master Stepmore. I believed  
her to be so when I gave the pledge; and, as I am a  
living man, I did so thinking only of her future hap-  
piness and of her being restored to her rightful name  
and rank. It is idle to regret it now; for, even were  
my honour not pledged, this maiden is of too lofty  
birth to be wedded to a tradesman's son."

"Aye, it is there where the shoe pinches!" ex-  
claimed the indignant merchant, bitterly.

"Not with me, Richard Stepmore, not with me,"  
replied Edwin Hume, quickly. "When she learns  
who she is, she herself may look down upon an al-  
liance with Sir Bertram Stepmore with scorn."

"Never, never!" cried Adelcia, indignantly.  
"Were I the daughter of a queen, I should be hon-  
oured in being the wife of Sir Bertram Stepmore."

"It is wondrous to me," said Richard Stepmore,  
as he regarded Edwin Hume with flashing eyes, "to  
know that you, who are in rags, in disguise, in evident  
fear of being detected—heaven knows for what—  
and indebted as you are to me for the life and purity  
of this daughter you claim, speak of your noble  
blood."

"You are irritated, Master Stepmore, and you have  
cause to be. Yet I do not hesitate to say that were  
I not bound by my oath to another I would now give  
my consent and aid to the immediate union of my  
daughter with your son."

"Ah, thank you, thank you, sir, for those kind  
words," exclaimed Adelcia, rising and kneeling be-  
fore her father.

For the first time Edwin Hume grasped the fair  
soft hands extended towards him, bent over his ter-  
rified daughter and pressed his lips to her beautiful  
brow.

"My child," he said, with great emotion strug-  
gling in his voice, "if I have seemed cold and cruel  
towards you, it has been because my heart reproached  
me for the bitter wrong my hasty oath has done.  
Heaven forgive me for that deed."

"And can it not be undone, my father?" asked  
Adelcia, for the first time calling him by that en-  
deared name.

"He to whom I spoke the oath is harsh, cold,  
and ambitious," replied Edwin Hume, gravely, "and  
he alone can release me from my pledge."

"And this man—who is he, my father? When  
did he ever see me?"

"He has never seen you, my poor child."

"He has never seen me and yet desires to make  
me his wife!" exclaimed Adelcia, while Richard  
Stepmore uttered no cry of surprise, but said:

"The great and noble do not always wed for worth  
and beauty, Adelcia. They wed for rank and wealth."

"But who is he? What is his name?"

"He does not wish to wed you himself, my daugh-  
ter," replied Edwin Hume. "He desires to make you  
the wife of his son, and it is to that compact that my  
oath has been given. You do not know him, nor  
have you ever seen him."

"But may I not be told the name of the son, and  
the name of the father also?" pleaded Adelcia.

"Knowing the name you would hate it and all  
who bear it, my daughter," replied Edwin Hume. "It  
is better, if you are fated to wed him of whom I  
speak, that you should meet him not suspecting that  
you are pledged to him by the solemn oath of your  
father. Perhaps, then, you may learn to love him  
and to forget Sir Bertram."

"Never, never," cried Adelcia, vehemently. "Oh,  
my father, I used to pray that I might one day find  
my father—I used to think fondly how I could em-  
brace and caress him, and call him 'father, dear  
father'—but alas! must my heart not now deplore  
the day when I found my father?"

Edwin Hume pressed another kiss upon her brow  
and said:

"Leave us, my poor child, for a time, for I wish to  
speak with Master Stepmore alone."

"Oh, it is so cruel in you, sir, to keep the name of  
this man a secret from me," pleaded the unhappy  
girl. "At least I would find him, and tell him that  
my heart is for ever given to another. That never,  
never can I cease to love Sir Bertram; that I have  
loved him for years. Oh, I am sure that I could  
move his heart to pity, for if he has a spark of noble  
feeling in his bosom, he would release you from your  
oath, and never seek to bind me to a life of misery."

"My dear daughter, when you shall know the man  
to whom I am bound by my oath, you may change  
your mind. If not, then persuade him to release me  
if you can."

"I never thought that I could hate anyone," said  
Adelcia, as her face, flushed with emotion, suddenly  
grew pale, "but now I know that I can hate, and  
most bitterly, too. I shall discover the name of this  
would-be-unknown suitor, and if he does not re-  
lent—"

"You will destroy your father," interrupted Edwin  
Hume, sternly, and yet sadly.

Adelcia checked her bitter words, and hastily  
pressing her lips to the pale cheek of her adopted  
father, hurried from the room to give vent to her  
grief in the privacy of her own apartment.

(To be continued.)

## FACETIE.

OUT OF HER ELEMENT.—The last thing that you  
would expect a woman to like is—a Still-room.—  
Punch.

LOOK HERE, LOYD LINDSAY.

Briek Volunteer (to languid ditto): "You'll be at  
drill next Saturday, won't you?"

Languid One: "Eh, ah, it's the first this season,  
isn't it? Ya-as, think I shall. There's sure to be  
more talk than drill; so it'll be a good night to go!"  
—Punch.

NOT SUCH A BAD NOTION.—The directors of the  
North Kent line, with a view to economise the con-  
sumption of fuel to the utmost extent, are about to  
try the experiment of heating the offices and wait-  
ing-rooms of the Kentish Town station with "Kent-  
ish fire." The N. E. R. is, in many respects, a pat-  
tern to other lines, and the directors have our best  
wishes for their success.—*Fun*.

## THE SILVER WEDDING.

A CENTURY strikes its quarter-hour,  
To mark the years so swiftly fled  
Since the sweet marriage vows were said  
That gave your lives their richest dower.

Those years on both have left their trace—  
The manly life hath manlier grown;  
And she, for girlish beauty flown,  
Finds tenderer beauty in its place.

Time takes—but gives more largely still  
To all who use his gifts aright—  
Patience, and power; the present sight  
That looks beyond the clouds of ill;

And faith that grasp the unseen good,  
And fills the voids of life with joy  
Subtle as life, when no alloy  
Taints the rich fullness of the blood.

What matters, though on cheek and brow  
Are seen some deepening lines of care,  
And gleams of silver in the hair  
Proclaim life's autumn cometh now?

The passing years reveal this truth—  
That hearts where Love hath built his shrine  
Clasp life immortal and divine,  
Since Love is everlasting youth.

The generous faith—the fervid glow—  
The boundless trust of each in each—  
All feelings too refined for speech,  
Which once ye knew ye still do know:

And joy, and grief, and anxious care,  
And, happily, many a hope decayed;  
Life's pleasant sunlight, and its shade,  
And the sweet sanctities of prayer

Have hallowed all your wedded days,  
And made your hearts more truly one;  
So Love's perpetual benison  
Is yours, through all life's devious ways;

And for your "Silver Wedding" ring  
The joy-bells with their sweetest chime,  
While, woven with the poet's rhyme,  
A warm "God bless you!" here we bring.

W. H. B.

## GEMS.

THERE is nothing so fearful as a bad conscience.

THE violet grows low and covers itself with its own  
tears, and of all flowers yields the sweetest fragrance  
—such is humility.

THE crow will become white before the man who  
seeks for knowledge without application will become  
learned.

ALL men who do anything must expect a deprecia-  
tion of their efforts. It is the dirt which their chariot  
wheels throw up.

## STATISTICS.

THE acreage under wheat is larger in 1868 than in  
1867, in each division of the kingdom, the total in-  
crease amounting to 310,000 acres.

THE acreage under barley in 1868, compared  
with 1867, shows a falling off in England to the ex-  
tent of 112,000 acres, but as there is an increase of  
4,000 acres under barley in Wales and Scotland, and

of 16,000 acres in Ireland, the actual decrease of  
acreage under that crop in the United Kingdom in  
1868 amounts to 92,000 acres.

PROBATES AND WILLS.—The numbers of wills de-  
posited in the year 1867 amounted to 26,559 from  
England, 2,588 from Scotland, and 186 from Ireland.  
The number in 1868 amounted to 24,548 England;  
2,327 Scotland; no return from Ireland. The grants  
of administration amounted in number in 1867 to  
9,818 England; none from Scotland; 222 from Ire-  
land. In 1868 they amounted to 9,505 in England;  
no return from Scotland and Ireland. The above  
statement shows that the decrease in 1868 in the  
number of wills deposited was 2,011. The adminis-  
trations shew an increase in 1868 of 193 over the  
1867 returns.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

NARCISSUS FLOWERS IN TURNIP.—First cut your  
turnip in half, against the grain. One turnip will  
make two flowers. Shave a thin slice off the flat side  
all round, depressing the knife at the edge, and scrape  
gently all over, to make the surface look rounded, that  
is to say, rising in the middle and sloping away on  
all sides. Now slice off the back, leaving the edges  
the thickness of a penny piece and the centre an inch  
thick, and rather pointed, to allow of a wire being  
passed through to form the stalk. Don't use thick  
wire; two thin pieces passed through side by side (not  
in the same hole), and all twisted together, are less  
likely to break through than one thick piece. Now  
with a penknife cut a cone-shaped piece out of the  
middle of the smooth side, to form the heart of the  
flower; then pass the knife carefully round this again  
and cut or scrape away the turnip on all sides, so as  
to leave the centre higher than the petals. Now mark  
the five petals with the point of the knife, and then  
cut out the wedges between them, shaving away all  
thick places, to make the narcissus look as delicate  
and natural as possible. Colour the edges of the centre  
a bright amber. A pretty jonquil can be made of carrot  
in the same way. Colour the middle of this red or  
brown, instead of yellow. Convolvuli, roses, and pas-  
sion flowers are also easily made; but the narcissus  
is the most effective, and when you have accomplished  
this well you can find out the way to cut any flower.  
The turnips for this purpose are best from December  
to February, as the old ones are flaky. As soon as  
the new ones come in they are fit to cut. To mount  
the flowers, twist them up into bouquets with ever-  
greens or parsley (using fine wire), and lay them round  
your dishes, or make wreaths, if for garnishing hams  
and tongues. Don't make them long before they are  
wanted, or they will change colour.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE wine crop of California, in 1867, amounted to  
4,500,000 gallons, and that of 1868, it is estimated will  
reach 7,000,000 gallons.

THE colossal bust of Clytie turning to the Sun, by  
Mr. Watts, will shortly be placed in the South Ken-  
sington Museum on loan.

A WRITER estimates the sum lost and won at cards  
in the Paris clubs at one million francs a day. The  
cards alone cost eight thousand francs per night.

AMONG the 368 carriages which are catalogued for  
sale at Madrid, and have belonged to the ex-Queen  
of Spain, is one ornamented with panels painted by  
Murillo.

A NEW BONNET MATERIAL.—At a meeting of the  
Royal Botanical Society, the assistant secretary, Mr.  
Sowerby, exhibited a bonnet which had been received  
from Jamaica. It was made of a novel material, said  
to be the skin of the leaf of the Indian dagger plant.

ANY persons who may desire to see the principal  
rooms of the India office will be admitted between  
the hours of twelve and three every Friday until fur-  
ther notice, on delivering their cards to the porter at  
the principal entrance on the south side of the quad-  
rangle.

THE urgent need for a more extensive system of  
night schools in the black country has been strikingly  
illustrated by a statement made a few days since by  
the Rev. A. B. Prior, vicar of St. George's, Wolver-  
hampton, to the effect that, of 100 girls married in his  
church, only twelve were able to sign the register.

CONVICTION FOR NOT WEIGHING BREAD.—Joseph  
Parsons, baker and seller of bread at Little Canford,  
was fined 1*l.* and costs, for not having scales and  
weights in his cart when selling bread to customers.  
The case was proved by P.C. Chinn.—Defendant  
pleaded that the whole of the bread was ordered, but  
the Bench told him that made no difference. If he  
only took a loaf he must take scales and weights with  
him.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. G. S.—On attaining the age of twenty-one, your master has no farther claim on you.

ALICE GRAY.—The time of mourning must be regulated by the feelings of the parents.

MILDRED BARTON.—We must refer this correspondent to the notice at the end of the last column of this page.

INGOURE.—Firms are never addressed as enquire; the correct superscription should be, The Messrs. McWade, Hogg & Co.

CONSTANT READER.—Cheerful society, early rising, and exercise in the open air will prove beneficial; also avoid excitement, too much study, and late meals.

A PLAY-GOER.—The Surrey Theatre was destroyed by fire August 12, 1895, and, as near as we can remember, about 1866.

ERENTE.—Great care and practice will be required to make your writing fit for business or any public office; but patience and perseverance generally surmount difficulties.

S. J. E.—If heirs male are not especially named, the property then goes to heirs general. No property can be left to heirs for ever.

A. B.—Address a letter through the post-office to the secretary of the Gentlewoman's S.M. Help Association, London. It will assuredly reach its destination.

ROBERT CROSLLEY.—The numbers are in print. Apply to the editor, who will forward them to you on receipt of the requisite number of postage stamps.

JAMES SCOTTCROFT.—We cannot print the name of any particular tradesman; you will find a host of portable cooking apparatus manufacturers in the London Directory.

AGNES.—Soft words fall like a healing balm on the hearts of all, they turn aside wrath, therefore it is worth while employing them.

MARGARET.—Royal personages, when married, bear their arms upon a separate shield, a second shield bearing the impaled arms of the husband and wife.

PETER.—"The Pilgrim's Progress" was written by John Bunyan in Bedford Gaol, where he was imprisoned for twelve years. The first part was published in 1678.

H. G.—Clocks and watches were taxed in 1797, but the tax being very obnoxious it was repealed in the ensuing year.

LEAH.—The Apocrypha means certain books, supposed to have been written after the time of the prophets, held in esteem by the Jews, as containing much useful information, but not considered to be of Divine authority.

FREDERICK.—The term "month" is understood in commercial proceedings to be a calendar month, and not a lunar month, unless it appears from the general context of the contract that a lunar month was intended.

RAULF.—The passionate man, who carries his heart in his mouth, is rather to be pitied than feared; his threatenings serve no other purpose than to forearm those whom he threatened.

E. L.—A Chairman of Committees is appointed for each session; he has the superintendence of all the procedure in private bills, and the function of checking all irregularities and undue practices by their promoters.

B. L. M.—It is a satisfaction to us that B. L. M. expresses his thanks for the information we were enabled to impart. We are ever anxious and willing to answer queries to the best of our ability.

A CLERK.—Abyssinian gold is a substitute for the virgin metal, and so nearly resembling it, that detection to the unpractised eye is hardly possible. Mr. Fyke, of Thavies Inn, Holborn, is the inventor.

JANE.—Worsted and lamb's wool stockings should never be mended with worsted or lamb's wool, because the latter being new it shrinks more than the stockings, and draws them up till the toes become short and narrow, and the heels have no shape.

ROBERT.—Possession of house, land, or other real property for twenty years, without rent or acknowledgment in writing to any person, gives an absolute title to the property against all claimants, and an action for ejectment to turn such possessor out of the property cannot be sustained.

LILY OF DUNDRE.—1. Yes. 2. Write to the Secretary of War, & the office of the Patriotic Fund is at 19, New Street, Spring Gardens; the hon. secretaries are Captain E. G. Fishbourne, R.N., Brigadier-General J. E. Lefroy, R.A.; the assistant secretary is W. H. Muford, R.N.

HENRY.—The Know-Nothing was a society which arose in 1835, in America. Their principles were embodied in the following propositions (at New York in 1835). They then possessed several newspapers, and had much political influence over the elections, and held secret meetings. A society was formed in 1855, in opposition to the above, called

Know-Somethings; both these bodies are said to have been absorbed into the two great parties of Democrats and Republicans at the presidential election in 1856.

CLARA.—Gentle words, which by some are intended but as compliments, are not always politeness, because anyone can be very polite, cuttingly, freely, cruelly so, without being complimentary. To be complimentary is to be more than polite.

EDGAR.—"Ship money" was first levied about 1097, to form a navy to oppose the Danes. The impost being illegally levied by Charles I. in 1644-5, led to the revolution, one of the dark scenes of which was his death, on January the 30th, 1649.

MARK.—Stamp duties were first instituted in 1671; they were re-enacted in 1694, when a duty was imposed upon paper, vellum, and parchment. The stamp duty on newspapers was commenced in 1713, and every year added to the list of articles upon which stamp duty was made payable.

JULIA.—A musician is said to play with expression, when he carefully observes the various modifications of *forte* and *piano*, *legato* and *staccato*, and when he imparts to the composition which he is performing, a particular charm arising from the impulse of his own feelings.

JANE.—The invention of the scale of musical intervals (commonly called do or *ut*, *re*, *mi*, *fa*, *sol*, *la*), to which it was added afterwards, and for which the first seven letters of the alphabet are now employed, is ascribed to Guido Areteo, a Tuscan monk, about 1025.

ARUNDEL.—The London Gazette was commenced at Oxford, November 27, 1665; the court then residing there on account of the plague. The word "gazette" was derived from a small Venetian coin, which was the price of the first newspaper, about 1536.

J. E. S.—1. Ginger may be preserved in the following way: scald some small pieces till they become tender, then peel them, and place in cold water, frequently changing it; then put the pieces into a tin syrop, and, in a few days, put them into jars, and pour a rich syrop over. 2. Handwriting good.

ALLER.—The Fifth Monarchy Men were those who, about 1645, supposed the period of the Millennium to be just at hand, when Jesus should descend from heaven, and erect the fifth universal monarchy. They proceeded so far as to elect Christ King in London. Cromwell dispersed them in 1653.

LADY, ART THOU SLEEPING?  
Oh, lady, art thou sleeping?  
Silence reigns o'er all;  
My lonely watch I'm keeping;  
Dewdrops round me fall.

Chorus. The night is gone, and morning  
Is lighting up the sky,  
The day at last is dawning,  
Lady-love, good-bye!

Oh, lady, art thou dreaming?  
Happy be thy rest;  
The silver moon is beaming  
Down the distant west.

Chorus. The night is gone, and morning  
Is coming with her light;  
The day at last is dawning,  
Lady-love, good-night!

Oh, lady, art thou sleeping—  
Dreaming now of me?  
The stars above are peeping  
While I stare to thee.

Chorus. Sweet spirits 'round thee hover,  
Till slumber breaks her spell;  
The night at last is over,  
Lady-love, farewells! S. W.

ANNIE FOLEY.—We know of no better recipe for turning a ruddy complexion into a pale one than a severe illness. How foolish of Annie, even wicked, to desire to change the hue of God's best gift, health. Some foolish young women drink vinegar, and so attain the desired paleness, thus injuring their health.

A. B. C.—You can recover the rent, by distraint, if the tenant be still in possession, and if not, by County Court process. 2. You can administer to the will. The expense will depend upon the amount of property left under it. You should apply to a proctor, who will take out letters of administration at Doctors' Commons.

LADY.—It is an undoubted truth, that the less one has to do, the less time we find now to do it. One year can procrastinate, one can do it when one will, and therefore one seldom does it at all; whereas those who have a great deal of business must be made to it, and then they always find sufficient time to do it.

ANDREW.—In 1602 monopolies reached to such a height in England, that Parliament petitioned against them. In 1630 Charles I. established monopolies on soap, salt, leather, &c., to supply a revenue without the help of Parliament. In 1640 it was decreed that no monopolies should in future be created by royal patent.

ELEANOR.—Lancashire was created a county palatine by Edward III. in favour of his son, John of Gaunt, who had married the daughter of Henry, Earl Duke of Lancaster, in 1359, and succeeded him in 1361. The court of the Duchy Chamber of Lancaster was instituted in 1359. On the accession of Henry IV. in 1399, the duchy merged into the Crown.

GOSAMER.—Mildewed linen or cloth may be restored, by soaping the spots while wet, covering them with fine powdered chalk, and then rubbing it well in; another method is to rub the spots with a little powdered oxalic acid, or salts of lemon and clean warm water; let it remain on for a few minutes, and then rinse in clean water.

M. A. B.—We do not insert advertisements of the kind in these columns. We fear that your search for your son is hopeless; wait patiently, and probably you will hear from him. The newspapers of Australia and America are so numerous that you could not advertise with any chance of success. Your only course would be, if you can afford it, to advertise in the Times.

G. J. W.—To make marmalade: cut very pale Seville oranges into quarters, take out the pulp, put it into a basin, and take away the skins and seeds; place the peels in a little salt and water, and let them stand all night, then boil

them in spring water until they are tender, cut them into very thin slices, and put them into the pulp. To every pound of marmalade put 1 pound and a half of double-refined beaten sugar, boil them together gently for twenty minutes, if not transparent boil them a short time longer; stir gently all the time, but take care not to break the slices, when cold put it into jars and tie down tightly. 2. To clean silk or ribbon, take 4 oz. of soft soap, the same of honey, the white of an egg, and a wineglassful of gin, mix together, and rub the material with a hard brush thoroughly; afterwards rinse in cold water, leave it to drain, and iron whilst damp.

OSCAR.—Factories are establishments supplied with machinery for producing manufactures of all kinds. They have immensely increased in this country since 1813. In consequence of a report to Parliament, the Factory Act was passed in 1833, regulating the hours of labour. No children can be employed under nine years of age, except in silk factories. Other acts regulating factories have been passed since.

JAMES.—Logarithms, so useful in mathematics, are the indices of the ratio of numbers one to another. They were invented by Baron Napier, of Merchiston, an eminent Scotchman, who published his work in 1614. The invention was afterwards completed by Mr. Henry Briggs, at Oxford, in 1624. The method of computing by means of marked pieces of ivory was discovered about the same time, and were hence called Napier's Bones and Napier's Bones.

E. A. H.—1. To remove superfluous hair, take a little of the best lime, put it in a saucer, and pour boiling water on it until it falls to powder, then add enough water to make it into a paste; spread this thickly over the hair to be removed, let it remain till no longer bearable, then take a paper-knife and imitate the process of shaving; afterwards, wash the part, and apply a little cold cream to allay any irritation of the skin. 2. Handwriting good.

SIR MORTIMER.—There is no lad so young, or friendless, that he cannot seek the advice of an hospital surgeon, who, believe us, would be your best friend; in the meantime, discontinue the use of tobacco, take as much exercise in the open air as your time, or business, will permit; read wholesome, refreshing books, or seek converse in decent society; eat sound, wholesome food; retire to rest and rise early; make frequent use of the tepid, or sponging bath; live temperately; in fact, make up your mind "to get well," and your cure will be effected.

CLARE B.—1. A decoction of sassafras can be made with 4 oz. of fresh sassafras, sliced and bruised, boiled over a slow fire in 4 quarts of water till it is consumed to three pints; a short time before the boiling is ended, add 1 oz. of sassafras wood, the same quantity of liquorice root, and strain the liquor. 2. To remove pimples, make a lotion of 1 oz. of oil of sweet almonds and 1 drachm of fluid potash, shaken well together, then add 1 oz. of rose-water and 6 oz. of pure water; the pimples must be first rubbed with a rough towel, and then bathed with the lotion.

HOMER BON, 5 ft 10 1/2 in., dark, and in easy circumstances. Respondent must be of medium height, fair, and fond of home.

JENNIE SHREWSBURY, 4 ft 3 in., eighteen, curly hair, hazel eyes, fond of home, and domesticated. Respondent must be dark, fond of home and singing. A carpenter preferred.

LOTTY and CORNELIA.—"Lotty," twenty, medium height, dark hair and eyes. "Cornelia," eighteen, medium height, dark hair, and blue eyes.

EMILY and LIZZIE.—"Emily," seventeen, medium height, dark hair and eyes, with good prospects in life. "Lizzie," eighteen, medium height, blue eyes, dark brown hair, red lips, musical, and domesticated.

UNPREFERRABLE, twenty, medium height, dark, with between 2000 and 3000 a-year. Respondent must be of medium height, and a good musician. If possessed of a little money so much the better.

ANNIE and LIZZIE.—"Annie," twenty, dark hair and eyes, medium height, good looking, and respectable. A tradesman preferred. "Lizzie," seventeen, medium height, dark, and a tradesman's daughter. A tradesman preferred.

C. P., twenty-eight, 5 ft, dark hair, hazel eyes, good looking, domesticated, fond of home, and affectionate. Respondent must be tall, dark, about thirty, fond of home, and a testotaller.

POLLY and LOTTIE.—"Polly," twenty-five, medium height, fair, brown hair, thoroughly domesticated. A mechanic preferred. "Lotty," eighteen, fair, blue eyes, a good figure, and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty, good tempered, and respectable.

E. J. W. and ANNIE.—"E. J. W.," nineteen, medium height, brown curly hair, hazel eyes, fond of home, and thoroughly domesticated. "Annie," twenty-one, medium height, dark brown hair and eyes, thoroughly domesticated, and fond of home. Tradesmen preferred.

## COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

LILY is responded to by—"Charles Hampson," nineteen, 5 ft 8 in., good looking, and a cabinet-maker.

EMILY by—"B. A." (a bachelor), tall, good looking, dark curly hair, in a good position, and has an income of 3000.

MIRIAM DAY (a servant) by—"George," medium height, dark brown hair, and a mechanic.

W. S. by—"Laura Barnett," twenty, 5 ft 4 in., dark, black hair, gray eyes, and thoroughly domesticated. "Emily," twenty-one, 4 ft 11 in., fair, and fond of home;—"Elizabeth," twenty-three, rather tall, fair, and a very good temper; and—"Lily," twenty-two, 5 ft 6 in., dark hair and eyes, an amiable disposition, and fond of home.

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N.B.—CORRESPONDENTS MUST ADDRESS THEIR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 33A, Strand, W.C.

†) We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily, authors should retain copies.

London: Printed and Published for the Proprietor, at 33A Strand, by J. WARREN.